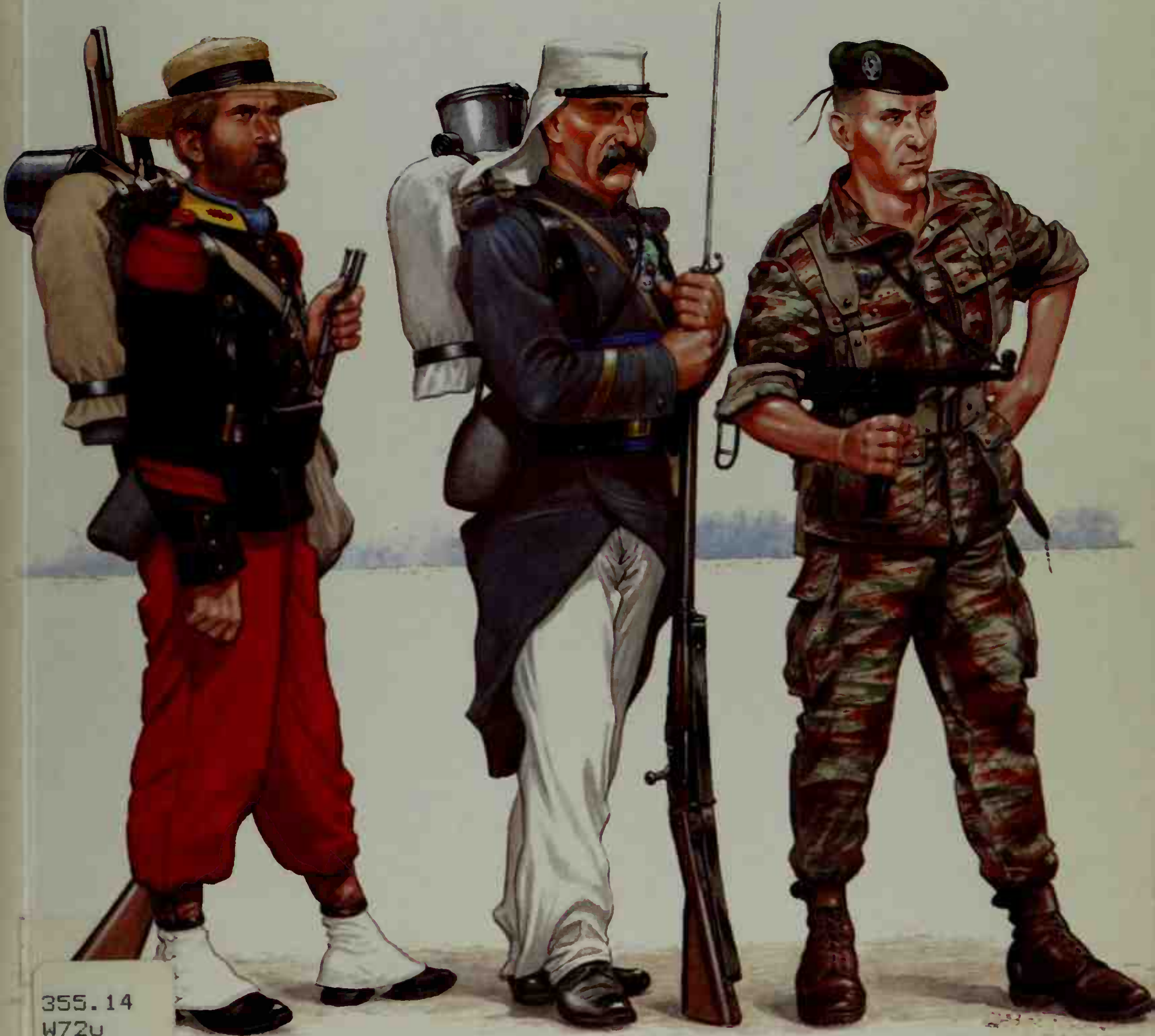
UNIFORMS OF THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION



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Martin Windrow

Illustrated by Michael Chappell

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UNIFORMS OF THE

FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION

1831-1981

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by

MARTIN WINDROW

Colour Illustrations by Michael Chappell

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This book is dedicated, with respect and gratitude, to
CHARLES MILASSIN DE CSIKY

Adjudant-Chef of Foreign Infantry
Honorary Major of United States Infantry
Knight of the Holy Crown of St Stephen of Hungary

Military Medal; National Order of Merit; War Cross 1939–45 (three Palms, four Stars); War Cross for Overseas Operations (one Palm, two Stars); Combattant's Cross; Order of Military Merit; Colonial Medal (clasps Maroc, Sahara, Tunisie 1942–43, Indochine); *Medal of Liberated France (Serious Wound Star); Commemorative Medal 1939–45 (clasps* Afrique, Tunisie 1942–43, Liberation, Allemagne, Extreme-Orient); *Indo-China Medal (Serious Wound Star); Thai Order of Military Merit; Wound Medal; First Army Medal; European Combattant's Cross; Africa Star (Britain); Italy Star (Britain); Bronze Star (USA).*

MILES LEGIONIS XXX ANNOS, AMICITIA SUA ME
DIGNUM ESSE PUTAVIT

A soldier of the Legion for thirty years,
he has paid me the compliment of his friendship.

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UNIFORMS OF THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION 1831–1981

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Introduction

The aim of this book is to present, as fully as space allows, an account of the development of the uniforms of the French Foreign Legion. Despite the publisher's generosity in the article of colour plates, it would be unrealistic to claim that the result is entirely comprehensive. The Legion has existed for 150 years, and has at times achieved a strength of some 30,000 men in a score of major units scattered throughout the world. It has always indulged in a fair degree of diversity of uniform, due both to a lively sense of unit individuality, and to its frequently underprivileged position on the chain of supply. *Se débrouiller* has always been the most common verb in the language of the Legion.

I believe it is fair to claim that this book represents the fullest treatment yet published. Nevertheless, this is the logical point at which to introduce a 'blanket' qualification. The history of military dress may appear to the novice to have a comfortingly rigid skeleton in the form of official regulations; but like most skeletons among the higher animals, this one is rarely visible from the outside. The major trap for the researcher, which I have been at some pains to avoid, is the temptation to generalise from the particular. Where the regulations are available and relevant they are quoted. Whenever possible, however, I have preferred to follow actual pictorial evidence. I have tried to reconcile the two sources, but have generally placed more weight on the photograph, the sketch from life or the veteran's memoir than upon the cold print from Paris.

The Legion was for many decades an obscure, not to say despised branch of the French 19th Army Corps. It received new patterns of uniform and equipment later than many other corps, if at all. The insistence of quartermasters the world over that all stocks of old material be used before the new pattern is issued — an invariable characteristic of the species, throughout history — has played a considerable part in the appearance of the légionnaire. The physical dispersal and remoteness of Legion units has combined with the age-old tradition of *se démerder* to distance the légionnaire even further from the official model. The authorities have never hesitated to rely upon the extraordinary range of skills and former professions to be found in the ranks. In the great days of French Algeria and Morocco, any Legion battalion could be counted upon to produce at least one man who had, in happier days, manufactured, sold, repaired, stolen, or at least had a good look at any required item. It was normal for the légionnaire to be required to make for himself and his comrades, from materials provided or scrounged, many of the minor items of his uniform and kit. The late twentieth century student may go badly astray if he seeks in an earlier age of warfare for information which fits the present-day matrix of mass production in minute accordance with a single official sealed pattern.

This book is about uniforms; and for that reason I have been obliged, regretfully, to limit the material on the Legion's battle history to a bare minimum. I hope I have included enough to enable the reader to make sense of the colour plates in the context of unit organisation and deployment at any given period. To cover in narrative form the eventful history of this extraordinary corps through 150 years of war and peace in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, East, West and Central Africa, Madagascar, Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, Italy, Germany, France, Norway, Britain, Russia, Formosa, Indo-China, Mexico, South America and the Pacific islands would take a far thicker book than this — one which I hope to write one day, but not yet.*

Equally, the proliferation of individual unit badges over the past 40 years has been such that only a representative selection of the most important has been included, out of more than 250 known examples. For the rich fields of flags, vehicle colourschemes and markings, and other colourful aspects of *Legionalia* there has been no space at all. I hope that by concentrating on the mainstream of uniform history as it affected the junior ranks of rifle companies I have succeeded in covering that one aspect in, at least, respectable depth.

Terminology

For reasons of space, clarity, and Anglo-Saxon

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*There is a good short history in English, *The Story of the French Foreign Legion*, by Edgar O'Ballance, published by Faber & Faber; the same author and publisher have also produced histories of the Indo-China War, 1945–54, and the Algerian War, 1954–62, which are relevant. The best short history of all, with fine photographs and much unit detail, was published in November 1967 as *Special Hors Serie 3* of the French magazine *Historama*, with text by Lt Col Louis Garros.

habit, I have translated certain French terms by simplified English equivalents. I have generally used the term 'warrant officer' for the French ranks of *adjudant* and *adjudant-chef.* (For short periods, mainly in 1939–40, there was a French rank of warrant officer, but this did not carry exactly the same meaning as in English.) In the French Army ranks up to and including *caporal* are termed 'troops'; I have generally used the phrase 'enlisted ranks'. In one or two cases my 'enlisted ranks' refer to all ranks below *adjudant*, but I believe my meaning in these cases is clear in context. The term *sous-officier* refers only to the various grades of sergeant and sergeant-major, and I have translated this simply as 'NCOs'. The rank of *caporal-chef* is officially included among the 'troops', but in recent decades some of the uniform distinctions of the *sous-officier* have been extended to the '*capo-chef*'; again, individual mentions will clarify this point.

Describing colours is a notoriously inexact business. The French *garance*, identifying the rich red of French Army trousers, cap crowns and some tunic details, has no English equivalent more exact and less unwieldy than 'madder red', and even this is open to wide interpretation. For simplicity I have used the word 'crimson' for *garance* throughout the book. For what it is worth, several late nineteenth century examples of *garance* military cloth which I have handled come closest to No 10/B8 in the Methuen Handbook of Colour.

The colour of the French Army *capote* does not allow such exact description, and I have generally used 'grey-blue'. In the early decades of the nineteenth century it was officially described as *gris de fer*, 'iron grey', but from about 1840 contemporary paintings and surviving examples generally show a dark blue-grey shade. There was probably wide variation between batches, some tending to grey and others to blue. At this time the *capote* was an item of campaign equipment rather than a part of everyday uniform throughout the Army. As it became the norm for all field duties so a more uniform shade appeared, described from 1856 as *gris de fer bleuté*. Surviving examples today show a range of shades between a dark blue, and a definitely greyer shade roughly comparable to No 21/E7 in the Methuen charts.

The dark blue of *habits*, tunics and *képi*-bands, described initially as *bleu de roi* and from 1856 as *blue foncé*, was a dark navy blue. By the 1870s it was virtually black, and officers actually wore black cloth despite the regulation term 'dark blue'. *Képis*, shoulder-boards, and insignia backing have remained in such a dark blue as to be almost indistinguishable from black; I have generally used 'blue-black' or 'midnight blue'.

Method and Sources

In each chronological chapter a brief account of unit organisation, deployment and campaigns is followed by a chronological narrative of uniform regulations, changes, and reported exceptions within that period. In addition, each colour plate is accompanied by a short commentary, and here I have generally indicated my main sources. Since I have been squirrelling away every picture and note I could lay hands on for nearly ten years, to quote the exact pedigree of every photo used in the colour references would be both impossible and pointless. But where I have relied partly or wholly on the work of previous artists and writers, or upon published photos and accounts which are generally available, I have indicated the source by abbreviation.

The major published source has always been the superb series of commissioned histories of which three editions have now appeared under the title *La Livre d'Or de la Légion Etrangère,* in 1931, 1955 and 1976. These are referred to throughout as *L d'O(1), (2)* and *(3).* The magnificently produced first edition, commissioned by General Rollet, 'Father of the Legion', to coincide with the 1931 centenary celebrations, is now rare and expensive. It contains a fairly detailed description of Legion uniform pre-1914, and some notes on the period 1914–30, by the master historian Jean Brunon, illustrated by Benigni. The proper posture for any later researcher is sitting at the feet of these giants. It is no impertinence to remark, however, that text and illustrations are not reconciled in the complete detail demanded by today's enthusiast in some parts of this important record. More importantly, Benigni's superb plates have been reproduced elsewhere many times since, often with misconceived captions which betray ignorance of the original accompanying text. The second and third editions generally contain selections of plates from the first with some additional material, and with up-dated uniform notes which perhaps lack the depth of detail of Brunon's splendid original. Nevertheless, all three editions of the Golden Book must be regarded as essential source-works.

A major written source is *La Légion Etrangère: Recueil de Documents* (Chapelot), prepared by Lt Col Morel and published in 1912. This is a compilation of all major orders concerning Legion unit organisation, uniform regulations and conditions of service up to that date, with page references to the original gazetting in the *Journal Moniteur Officiel* and *Bulletin Officiel:* it also contains a useful bibliography. These written regulations should not be accepted absolutely uncritically, but taken in conjunction with the *Livre d'Or* they are a most valuable foundation. I refer to this book as *Morel* in the plates commentaries and text.

Since the history of Legion uniforms has been at most periods simply an off-shoot of French infantry practice, with unit peculiarities, another main source has been *Les Uniformes de l'Armée Française 1872–1914*, a series of illustrated books privately produced by A. Galot and C. Robert and distributed through the Societé des Collectioneurs de Figurines Historiques, Paris. A section dealing specifically with the Legion was prepared but never published, owing to an untimely death; I am grateful to John Thompson of Edinburgh for the opportunity to study the typescript. References to these works are coded *Galot & Robert*. For the same reason, the earliest sections of Chapter One naturally owe a good deal to Malibran's standard work *Guide/Album du Guide à l'usage des Artistes et Costumiers*, 1904, which I have referred to simply as *Malibran*.

Useful material has appeared in many issues of the Legion's fine monthly magazine *Képi Blanc;* I have referred to this source as *KB*.

A most impressive series of articles on Legion uniforms by the French expert Raymond Guyader has appeared in recent issues of *Gazette des Uniformes* — latterly, simply *Uniformes*. They are heartily recommended, as indeed are all issues of what has become, under the inspired editorship of François Vauvillier, simply the best military magazine in the world. References are in the form, e.g., *G d'U no 33*.

A special publication of the *Carnet de la Sabretasche*, *'Hommage à la Légion Etrangère'*, appeared in 1963. This comprises a series of line drawings by various hands, some excellent and some extremely loose, and quite full accompanying notes. This generally relies upon the *Livre d'Or,* and should be regarded as a secondary source, though useful in parts. Where used, it is referred to as *Sabretasche*.

At several points in the text reference is made to the unpublished notes and photographs of *Milassin;* and this leads me naturally from sources, to acknowledgments.

Without the unfailing generosity, patience, and memory of *Adjudant-Chef* Charles Milassin de Csiky, this book would have been literally impossible. A soldier of the Legion for more than 30 years, and a student of uniform history for most of that time, Charles Milassin looks back on a career which began in a remote one-company fort in southern Morocco in the mid-1930s, and which spans active service, numerous wounds, and a galaxy of decorations in the course of some of the Legion's most punishing campaigns. The model and archetype of the Legion *sous-officier,* he now enjoys an active retirement on a hill-top in the Vosges near the scene of one of his hardest battles — a hill-top commanding good fields of fire in all directions, need it be said. Despite the weight of German metal which he has carried round with him ever since the battle of Tunisia and the liberation of Belfort, it is my happy conviction that he is virtually indestructible. His friendship over the years has been a matter of great pride to me.

For much material on the Legion of the 1970s, and for his hilarious company I am indebted to Tony Jackson, the one-time *Brigadier* 'Alexander Johnson' of the 1^er^ REC. Tony enjoys a rather specialised claim to fame as the most recent English *légionnaire* to be invalided out with major abdominal bayonet wounds, suffered in the course of service no less active for being generally unpublicised. As regulars at the *York Minster* can testify with feeling, his revised plumbing has in no way affected his capacity or his zest.

My special thanks to Mike Chappell must also be recorded here, for the great skill and imagination with which he transformed my colour briefing into a series of lively and meticulously detailed plates. It is rare for a writer in this field to have the luck of working with an illustrator who combines natural talent with the grounding of 22 years as a regular infantryman.

To all the friends and correspondents who have helped me over the years, and to all those 'civilian' friends who have patiently borne my interminable monologues on the subject, my sincere thanks. Those whose contribution has been most direct are listed in alphabetical order: Dan Ambrogi; Jean-Paul Benavente; Helen Bosshard; Wayne Braby; Tony Bradley; Emir Bukhari; Simon Dunstan; Gerry Embleton; Pierre Favre; Will Fowler; Aldo Gevi; Ron Harris; Richard Hook; J. Lorette; Angus McBride; Paul Yates Rockwell; Jerry Scutts; Willem Steenkamp; John Thompson; Bill Thorburn; François Vauvillier; Fred Wilkinson; Dick Windrow.

Croydon, January 1980. M.C.W.

1

Africa and Spain, 1831-54

The 'Old Legion'

At the beginning of 1831 King Louis-Philippe of France sat uneasily on his throne. Less than a year before, revolution had swept his predecessor from the same perch, and the mob was still restive. It had also been swollen in recent months by the disbandment of seven regiments of Swiss and Germans in the French Army; and the last subjects an insecure monarch wishes to see loitering on the streets of an excitable capital are disgruntled ex-soldiers. The fever of revolution and civil strife was infecting several other European countries at that time, and there had been an influx of foreign refugees and deserters, some less desirable than others. Finally, France's six-month-old military adventure in Algeria was proving unpopular with the families of Frenchmen, who were dying like flies from fever and in skirmishes with the Arabs, for no very clear national advantage. On 9 March 1831 a law was passed which offered a way out of these difficulties, and a royal ordinance was issued the following day which put it into effect. It is easy to believe the tradition that the idea originated with Marshal Soult, the Minister of War, once the wiliest of Napoleon's lieutenants.

The ordinance announced the formation of a 'Foreign Legion' for service outside French continental territory. Its battalions were to be organised in all respects like those of the French Line infantry, and were to have eight companies of 112 men each; as far as possible each company was to be composed of men speaking the same language. Enlistment was to be voluntary, for at least three years and not more than five; recruits were to be between 18 and 40 years of age, at least five feet tall, and in possession of certificates of birth, good health, and good character. On 18 March a supplementary order barred enlistment by Frenchmen, Swiss, or married men, without special dispensation.

The actual requirements were rather less stringent. Anybody could enlist, in practice, providing that their health was not visibly inadequate for military service; no papers were demanded, and any name or nationality was accepted. The recruits who presented themselves at the depots — first at Langres, later at Bar-le-Duc — were an extremely colourful crew. Apart from the Swiss and German ex-soldiers, there were hard cases, drifters, and fugitives of every description. Romantic boys and decayed drunkards rubbed shoulders with gullible would-be colonists, who had somehow got the idea that enlistment would entitle them to land grants in Algeria. In some cases French local authorities seem to have contrived to empty their jails and workhouses of citizens who had outlived their welcome.

The 1st Battalion accepted most of the trained ex-soldiers from the Swiss and Hohenlohe regiments, and the same racial mix was achieved in the 2nd and 3rd Bns. The 4th was largely Spanish, and was organised at Agen. The 5th, formed at Auxerre, was composed of Italians and Sardinians. The 6th, of Belgians and Dutch, was formed at Chaumont. (The 6th is the best example of the lack of judgement shown by the authorities in segregating nationalities; feeling between these two communities was running very high in the 1830s, and to form a battalion solely of Dutch and Belgians was like tying a cat and a dog in a sack. Old grudges within and between most of these national units led to serious problems of discipline.)

The battalions were issued with a motley stock of uniforms and equipment; given some rudimentary training; and shipped off from Toulon to Algiers in successive batches. (The depot had later been moved from Bar-le-Duc to Toulon.) Their reception was less than ecstatic. They were dumped in the French-held coastal enclave without proper officers or NCOs, and with little idea of what they were doing there. They feuded with each other and with anyone else handy; they tended to beat up their superiors; and they were regarded with disdain by the rest of the Army. A tough Swiss, Colonel Stoffel, accepted the task of whipping them into shape. With the aid of extremely robust disciplinary methods handed out by the nucleus of reliable Swiss and German veterans, and by French NCOs bribed to serve in the Legion for extra pay, he achieved a measure of order by the early months of 1832. By January the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Bns were installed in camps round Algiers, the 4th at Oran, and the partly-formed 6th at Bône. It was intended to form a 7th Bn of Poles in Algeria, but this was not completed until 1834; individual companies of Poles seem to have been attached to other battalions in the meantime.

French policy in Algeria was confused. 'Algeria' itself is a misnomer, suggesting a historic nation or entity where none in fact existed. Local leaders and traditional tribal alliances and feuds presented a bewildering picture. There was no central authority on the native side with whom France could negotiate or whose defeat would bring a general submission. There was no French government mandate to occupy a defined area permanently; the excuse for the initial invasion had been pent-up fury at the continual harassment of European shipping interests and trading enclaves by the lawless corsairs of the Barbary coast. The French Army in Algeria was thus reduced to a series of short-term tactical expedients, as tribesmen raided the fringes of the narrow coastal strip. The Legion was at first considered good for nothing but a labour corps, and spent its early months in Africa engaged in back-breaking projects such as road-building and draining marshes.

Work gangs, and the timber blockhouses which guarded the French perimeter, came under frequent attack: and it was in response to harassment near Maison-Carrée that the Legion were sent into their first fight. On 27 April 1932 the 3rd Bn took part in an attack on El Ouffia tribesmen nearby. They left a garrison in a new post; and on 23 May Lieutenant Cham became the first Legion officer to die in battle when he and some 26 men were killed in an ambush in the area.

In these early years the French troops enjoyed no particular advantage over the tribes. Usually outnumbered, they were operating in a strange country which the enemy knew from birth. The Arabs were not ignorant aborigines, but born warriors drawn from a sophisticated population whose contacts with European weapons and methods stretched back for centuries. In most actions the bulk of the Arabs were mounted, and highly mobile; they adopted hit-and-run tactics until they found an isolated target, and then overran it with courage and ruthlessness. Many were armed with firearms not inherently inferior to the flintlocks of the French; they had long-established workshops and powder mills to supply them. Although they were at a disadvantage in hand-to-hand combat against troops with long bayonets, their swordsmen were brave and skilled; since they seldom fought except on ground and at odds of their own choosing, they often overcame the notional advantages enjoyed by troops fighting in a co-ordinated body. They were masters of guerilla and ambush tactics; it is perhaps significant that the most successful Legion battalion in the early years was the 4th, composed largely of Spaniards, who forgot the drill book and applied the lessons of their own experience in open order, broken country fighting.

It should perhaps be emphasised here that the coastal regions of Algeria bear no resemblance to the desert of popular myth, but are very similar to parts of southern Europe. Extremely fertile valleys are separated by hills and mountains, some thickly wooded with pine, scrub oak, and juniper, and others bare and parched. Arab towns were of ancient foundation, solidly built and walled for defence, and usually surrounded by flourishing gardens and plantations. Fresh water was plentiful in some areas, scarce in others, and dictated the pattern of landscape and population. In winter the high ground can be miserably cold and rain-swept. In those days the roads and tracks were few and primitive; European troops marching with baggage wagons, or even mules, were limited to a few well-defined routes through the mountains, giving a major advantage to the defenders.

In April 1832 the Legion battalions were permitted to form élite companies — that is, two fusilier companies out of eight were redesignated as grenadiers and voltigeurs; despite this mark of favour, the Legion as a whole was still regarded by the French establishment as an extremely obscure and disreputable corps. In June Col Combes succeeded Col Stoffel, bringing with him the Legion's first flag, another mark of official approval.

A new Arab leader was starting to attract attention: Abd-el-Kader, Emir of Mascara, an educated and far-sighted chieftain who wielded both religious and secular power. The 4th Bn had some success against his warriors at Sidi-Chabal on 11 November 1832. By this time Col Bernelle had taken over command and the Legion numbered some 5,000. In March 1833 the 6th Bn took part in a drive against the Ouled Yacoub and Ouled Attia to the east of Algiers. In June and July the 4th and 5th Bns fought in the capture of Arzew and Mostaganem, and in the subsequent defence of the latter. In September columns were sent against the Hadjutes, and captured Coleah. In February 1834 the valuable Spanish 4th Bn was disbanded; France acceded to Spanish requests for their return home, where civil war was brewing. By now the Polish 7th Bn had been formed and this was brought to Oran to take over the duty and vacant number of the old 4th. The 1st and 2nd were now at Algiers, the 3rd at Bougie, the 5th at Oran and the 6th at Bône.

During 1834 there was a lull in the fighting. The French were trying to tame Abd-el-Kader by negotiation, but he used the time to extend his influence among the tribes. The following spring, with an army of 8,000 riders and 4,000 foot, partly trained by European renegades, he moved against Tlemcen. By-passing the town, he ran up against Gen Trezel's column at Moulay Ishmael on 26 June. The 2,500 French, including the Poles and Italians of the Legion's 4th and 5th Bns were caught in close country, and a two-day running battle ensued. Trezel decided to fall back on Arzew and Oran, and the légionnaires fought well in the hard-pressed screen which covered the laborious process of turning the heavy wagons round on the narrow track. An officer from each battalion was killed, together with an unknown number of men. The Legion continued to fight grimly in the rearguard; next day an Arab ambush on the Macta salt-marsh succeded in cutting the column in two, butchering the wounded in the wagons, and a complete disaster was only averted by the Legion's counter-attack. A junior officer, recently promoted from the ranks, was wounded and mentioned in despatches in his first battle — François-Achille Bazaine, who would continue to make a name for himself at the head of légionnaires for many years to come.

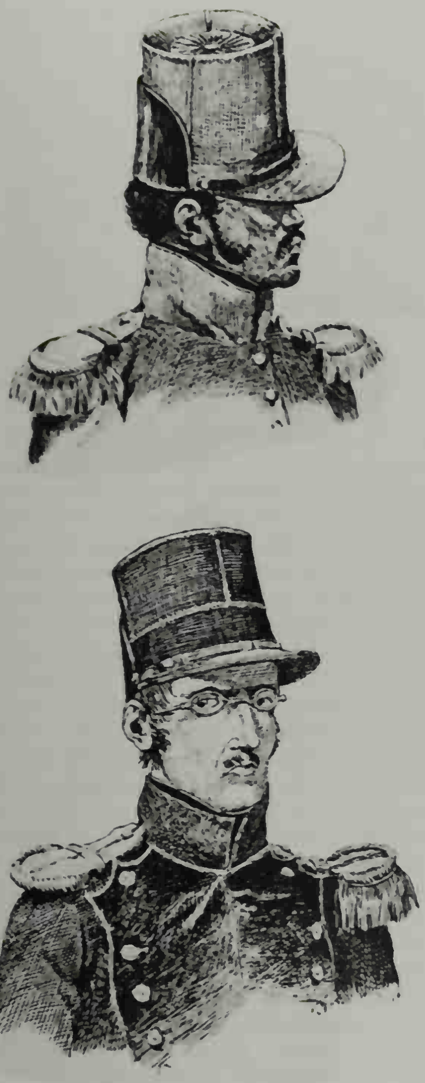
Spanish Interlude

Hardly had Trezel's exhausted survivors shambled back to Arzew when it became clear that in the corridors of power far to the north their growth from a brawling labour crew to a reliable infantry regiment had gone unnoticed. A royal ordinance announced that the Legion had been handed over *en bloc* to Spain. This cynical step, extraordinary to modern eyes, recalled the days when mercenaries were a commodity to be traded freely among kings and generals. France supported the Spanish Queen Isabella II in the Carlist War which had broken out between her and her uncle, Don Carlos — the latest, but by no means the last of the series of bloody civil wars to which Spain seemed uniquely damned. A cheap way of demonstrating that support was to sign over the Legion. Officers were given the choice of going on half-pay; the men were not given the option. On paper, France extracted a Spanish undertaking to honour the rights and conditions of service of the légionnaires; how scrupulously this was fulfilled under the circumstances of a Spanish civil war may be imagined. On 17 August 1832, 123 officers and some 4,000 men in six battalions landed at Tarragona. For more than three years they saw hard fighting, consistent neglect and death in a variety of miserable forms. Hardly ever paid or re-supplied, they dwindled into a forsaken band of scarecrows.

Bernelle, with the local rank of general, stayed with his men; he did his best to care for them, until his constant complaints to both Paris and Madrid became an irritation to the authorities and he was relieved of command in August 1836. One innovation credited to him is the break-down of the national battalions; he mixed companies of the different nationalities in new battalions, and when replacements ran out even the national companies were abandoned, to the improvement of discipline and *ésprit de corps*.

At first dispersed in small units to fight irregulars in Catalonia, the Legion was concentrated again in the miserable winter of 1835-36, and held a sector near Pamplona. In March 1836 Bernelle began organising integral supporting units — an artillery battery and three lancer squadrons. On 26 April at Tirapegui the 4th and 5th Bns held off some five times their number of Carlists for six hours before successfully disengaging. On 1 August the Legion did well at Zubiri — particularly the lancers. Small scale operations occupied the rest of the year. Despite the arrival of two batches of replacements, by the time Col Conrad arrived to take over in November 1836 only three weak battalions could be fielded. The men were ragged, hungry and unpaid, and desertions were frequent. Conrad was an inspiring leader who put some heart into his men in time for a spring campaign.

At Huesca in Aragon on 24 May 1837 the Legion lost 20 officers and some 350 men. Reduced to a single battalion, they came on 2 June to the olive groves of Barbastro. In the course of a confused battle they found themselves facing a Carlist unit of foreign volunteers; for some reason feelings ran unusually high and both mercenary legions tore into one another with relentless savagery. At a moment of uncertainty Conrad, his cap on the end of his cane, rallied his légionnaires in the thick of



Studies by Job of French soldier, *top,* and subaltern in Algeria in the 1830s, wearing slight variations of what became the definitive *casquette d'Afrique*. Compare with Colour Plates 1 and 2 (National Army Museum)

battle, and fell dead; his body was taken off the field by his loyal aide, Capt Bazaine. The two sides fought to a standstill; and by that night the Legion had ceased to be a significant military unit.

Ignored by both France and Spain, the remnants were left to rot at Pamplona. By the time they were disbanded officially on 8 December 1838 only some 500 remained. They returned to France where, amazingly, some 400 voluntarily re-enlisted for Algerian service.

The 'New Legion'

France had not been long in missing the Legion's services; on 16 December 1835 another royal ordinance created a second Foreign Legion of one battalion. (It seems that mixed-nationality units were the norm from this point onwards.) This '7th Bn' was sent to reinforce the Old Legion in Spain in summer 1836. During that autumn another battalion was formed at Pau, and in December 1836 it arrived in Algeria, 800 strong, led by Cdt Bedeau. Four companies saw action at Bougie, encircled by Kabylie tribesmen; then, in July 1837, a second battalion was formed. In October 1837 drafts from each were used to mount a *bataillon de marche* for the attack on Constantine.*

The Bey of Constantine had been a leader of anti-French activity for years and, since an unsuccessful attempt on his city in 1836, his bands of Kabylie warriors had been particularly confident. The city was massively built and cleverly sited on a high rock almost surrounded by ravines far up in the hills. Governor-General Damrémont led the expedition in person and Cdt Bedeau and his 500 men marched out from Bône at the beginning of October. The march into the hills was a miserable ordeal, under torrential winter rains. Once established on the plateau of Koudiat-Aly, the only position from which the city could be approached, the French had to fight hard and repeatedly to defend their trenches and batteries while the artillery pounded the walls. Damrémont was killed on 12 October, and his chief of staff was mortally wounded; Gen Valée took command, and the next day the assault columns hurled themselves into the breach. A hundred légionnaires took part in the

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**Bataillon de marche, régiment de marche*. These terms will occur frequently in later chapters. They refer to a task-force unit formed for a specific expedition from drafts of different battalions or regiments. The parent regiments would remain at their normal stations, being brought up to strength with recruits from the depots, and their effectiveness as garrisons would therefore be maintained. The men of the expeditionary battalions would thus be seasoned veterans, normally still serving with comrades and under company officers familiar to them. At the end of the campaign they might remain to garrison the new area, being given the next highest vacant battalion number or they might be dispersed as replacements.

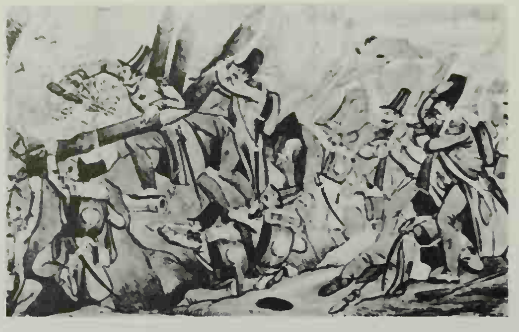
assault, which was successful after hard and costly fighting in the breach and in the bitterly-defended maze of streets inside. Capt Saint-Arnaud led his Legion platoon right through the casbah to the El Kantara gate, and many epics of courage were recorded in this battle, one of the most famous of the Algerian occupation. The Legion battalion was one of the units which remained to garrison Constantine, and later in October both battalions were granted élite companies to mark their gallantry.

December 1837 brought the formation of a 3rd Bn, total strength now reaching 3,000 men, based in Algiers, Constantine and Bône. In May 1839 the 1st Bn distinguished themselves at the capture of Djidjelli. In October that year a 4th Bn was raised.

In November 1839 Abd-el-Kader broke the misconceived Treaty of Tafna and sent his army of some 60,000 men swarming over the pacified areas. They slaughtered and burned the small communities of colonists which had grown up on the fertile Mitidja plain, taking war to the very walls of Algiers. All the Legion battalions saw hard fighting. The 2nd fought at Bougie, the 3rd at Boufarik and Blida. The 1st and 4th took part in the capture of Medea and Milianah in spring 1840 — a punishing expedition into the mountains which was ambushed on the way to and from the objectives in the pass of Mouzaia. The 4th was left to garrison Milianah, and was at once besieged. Ravaged by fever, they stood off repeated attacks between 15 June and 5 October, when the relief column found only 208 men out of 750 still on their feet. The 4th and 5th were again decimated by disease at Fondouk, losing nine officers and 207 men dead and 240 evacuated sick.

In June 1840 the New Legion was granted a flag in recognition of its conduct. In December it was decided to split it into two regiments of three battalions, and this had been achieved by May 1841. The 1er Régiment Etrangère was based around Algiers, the 2^{e} Régiment Etrangère at Bône.

The French counter-offensive began with the arrival early in 1841 of a new Governor-General, Thomas Bugeaud de la Piconnerie. This able, far-sighted and ruthless veteran of Austerlitz and the Peninsular War had been the French signatory of the Treaty of Tafna; his patience with Abd-el-Kader was now exhausted, and he came to settle affairs once and for all, armed with reinforcements, gold, and freedom of action.



Naive battle scene showing légionnaires storming a Carlist barricade; from *Der Bürgerkrieg in Spanien,* Leipzig, 1837 (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

Bugeaud determined to take the initiative away from the enemy. No longer would over-stretched French garrisons be at the mercy of mobile Arab bands which faded away into the wilderness before laboriously-assembled relief columns arrived. *Père* Bugeaud knew that the Arabs would not stay in the field for long if their villages, crops and herds were in real danger — without their safe refuges, the winter would turn them into starving wanderers. Instead of waiting for Arab initiatives, he mounted a series of fast, hard-hitting, lightly-equipped 'flying columns' which fanned out into the hinterland. The men laid aside their heavy accoutrements and unsuitable clothing; baggage was reduced to a minimum of rations and ammunition for a few days' forced march, and wagons were replaced by mules. A typical column would comprise one or two battalions of Legion or Line infantry, a few squadrons of French and native cavalry, a battery of mountain guns broken down into mule-loads, and a strong screen of irregular scouts. The column would maintain a killing pace over all kinds of terrain, and often caught dissident villages unprepared. The men would be killed, the buildings burned, the herds driven off and the crops or stored harvest destroyed. It was a ruthless policy, but it got fast results. Over a couple of years Abd-el-Kader's support dwindled seriously, as more and more tribes decided to take the long view, and submit. By 1843 Kader and his immediate followers were forced to take refuge over the border of the friendly Sultan of Morocco. He continued to foment trouble from this safe lair, but not on the scale of previous years.

The Legion saw almost continual marching and fighting in this period, but mostly on small scale operations: a few highlights must suffice.

In 1843, while establishing a chain of supply depots for the flying columns, the 3rd Bn, 1er RE first planted the Legion's flag at Sidi-bel-Abbès, about 97 kms (60 miles) south of Oran. Attacks on the roughly fortified camp the following year led to the first permanent buildings. From these humble beginnings grew the Legion's home and proudest showpiece, a town built entirely by légionnaires, housing its depot and its sacred relics.

Kader's frequent forays from Moroccan territory led Bugeaud to cross the border and occupy the town of Oujda in 1844. His subsequent retreat, under protest, in response to frantic orders from Paris, was interpreted as weakness. Abd-el-Kader led 40,000 men to the Algerian border. Bugeaud assembled 8,000 men and made a forced march ending in a night attack on 13 August. His victory on the Oued Isly brought Bugeaud a dukedom; more importantly, it forced the Sultan of Morocco to sign the Treaty of Tangier, promising to intern Kader if he took refuge in Moroccan territory, and granting the French the right of 'hot pursuit'. The 1er RE of the Legion fought at Isly.

The same unit distinguished itself at Mehab-Garboussa in September 1845, and on an expedition towards Ténès in April 1846. In April 1847 they fought at Moghar-el-Foukani in the Atlas Mountains, and dispersed dissidents in a drive towards Aïn Sefra. In December 1847 Abd-el-Kader was finally captured and exiled, and relative peace descended on western Algeria.

Meanwhile, in the east, the 2^{e} RE distinguished themselves at the capture of M'Chounech ridge in March 1844, an exploit which earned them a flag that September. In 1847-48 they saw hard fighting in the Kabylie and Aurès mountains. They were based at Batna in the summer of 1849 when the chieftain Bou-Ziane gathered a large dissident force at the oasis of Zaatcha, near Biskra. Two Legion battalions took part in a first, unsuccessful attack on the position in July; the French withdrew some distance, to enforce a partial blockade and await heavier artillery, when they saw what they were up against. Zaatcha was a dense palm grove criss-crossed with irrigation ditches and mud-brick walls, with strong clusters of inter-connected buildings dispersed around it. A canal and strong perimeter walls completed the picture. After heavy guns had been installed and brought into action, an assault went in on 20 October; it was repulsed at the breaches, and that night Bou-Ziane sortied and spiked several French guns. Several parties of Arab reinforcements were engaged on subsequent days; and on the 26th a second assault was mounted. Three assault columns, one led by the Legion, fought their way into and through the oasis, blowing their way from house to house with powder charges. The fighting was extremely hard and costly, and no quarter was given on either side.

The next two or three years were a time of consolidation. In 1851 the now General Saint-Arnaud mounted large-scale operations, in the course of which the 2^{e} RE distinguished itself at Fedj-Menazel. In 1852 the ever-troublesome Beni Snassen tribe rose up in the western hills near the Moroccan border, and both Legion regiments saw action in that area. In 1853 some 200 légionnaires mounted on camels took part in an expedition into the northern Sahara towards Ouargla, at the initiative of the 2^{e} RE's Col Carbuccia.

By the early 1850s the whole of northern Algeria was more or less pacified, with the exception of the mountains of Kabylia. Although plenty of hard fights and desperate marches lay in the future, they would be in the course of putting down periodic revolt, rather than initial occupation.

Uniforms 1831-54

1831-35

The uniform of the Legion is only vaguely described in the royal ordinance of 10 March 1831, article 3, in as far as it departs from that of the Line infantry; it was essentially that of the regulations of 9 May 1822.

The shako, larger at the top than at the headband, was of leather covered with black cloth, and had a 40mm crimson band round the top. The rounded black peak was slightly dished. There were brass chin-scales, with 40mm terminal buttons charged with a five-point star. At the top of the front surface was a round cockade, of 'pleated' leather, painted blue (centre), white and red. Below this was a brass plate of ornate shape. The upper part was a sunburst charged with a foliate wreath and a Gallic cockerel facing right; the lower part was an 'Amazon shield' charged with a five-point star in a circular wreath, supported each side by trophies of banners. A pompon would normally be worn centrally above the front edge of the shako top, in battalion colours — blue, crimson, yellow and dark green, and sky blue for the regimental depot — and bearing brass company numbers. Whether the Legion actually wore these we cannot be sure, nor what colours were worn by the 5th and 6th Bns. After élite companies were formed in April 1832, grenadiers and voltigeurs would wear pompons of 'shaving brush' shape, i.e. spheres and 'flames', in red and yellow respectively.

The fatigue cap or *bonnet de police* was no longer the 'night-cap' of Napoleonic days. The long 'flame' had disappeared, and was only simulated by piping, and a frontal tassel, on a sort of primitive 'sidecap'; this was of dark blue, piped crimson, and probably bore a crimson five-point star on the front of the deep turn-up. It was now carried in the pack, not rolled under the cartridge pouch.

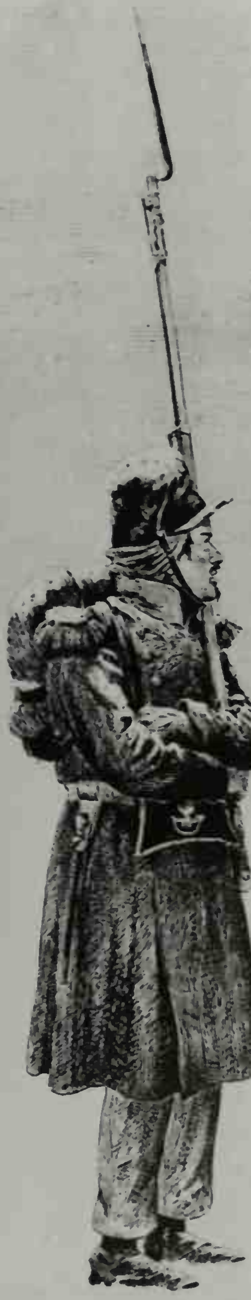
A stiff black stock was worn at the throat, under the high collar of the coat or *habit.* The coat was of 'royal blue', a very dark shade; it was single-breasted, cut off straight across the front of the waist, with rear tails reaching just to the knee, and as originally issued it had a square collar hooked closed — in 1832 this was ordered *échancré* or cut-away. Crimson piping edged the collar, the front join, the bottom edge at the front, and passed round onto the tails to form the edge-piping of the outer turnbacks; the inner turnbacks, epaulette loops or *brides,* straight cuffs, rectangular cuff-patches, and vertical three-point false pockets on the tails were similarly piped. Crimson turnback ornaments were worn in all four positions: originally a five-point star for all, and after the formation of élite companies in April 1832 a star, a grenade or a bugle-horn. At first all personnel wore a padded cloth '*galette*' or *contre-epaulette,* in blue piped along upper and lower edges with crimson; grenadiers and voltigeurs substituted scarlet and yellow fringed epaulettes from April 1832, and fusiliers kept the *galettes.* There were nine brass buttons of 23mm diameter, bearing a star surrounded by the unit title, down the front of the *habit;* two in the small of the waist at the rear; and three on each pocket. Three 17mm buttons were worn on each cuff-patch, and one on each shoulder for the epaulettes.

Corporals wore two diagonal scarlet wool braid bars on each forearm. Sergeants and sergeant-majors wore one and two respectively, in gold braid edged with crimson. *Fourriers* wore two gold bars on the forearms, and one on the upper arms. Re-enlistment chevrons were worn point up on the left upper arm, in red for troops and corporals, in plain gold for NCOs.

The long, rather loose trousers, cut *à pont,* were crimson. White trousers of lighter cloth were worn in summer. Except in the field, these were worn loose over half-gaiters of black or white cloth, depending on season. Dark blue trousers of obsolete pattern were worn as barrack and fatigue dress, according to one source.

Normal working dress for the troops was the *veste,* of dark blue, cut off straight at the waist, with a stand collar and long sleeves. In some cases it may have been piped crimson. In cold weather the *capote* or greatcoat was worn over this, and in the field it was often worn instead, directly over the shirt. By regulation it was of 'iron grey' cloth, with two rows of six uniform buttons, a stand collar, and (for fusiliers) plain shoulderstraps cut three-pointed at the outer end. There was probably a good deal of variation in practice. Grenadiers and voltigeurs wore their epaulettes on *veste* and *capote,* it seems. The greatcoats of NCOs were better cut, *à taille,* i.e. tailored to the waist. All had buttons in the rear of the waist so that the skirts could be buttoned back on the march. Instead of the *veste,* regulations prescribed for NCOs a dark blue *redingote* or full-skirted coat, with two rows of five buttons.

Equipment was Napoleonic in appearance. A single white crossbelt over the left shoulder supported the black cartridge pouch behind the right hip, with the bayonet scabbard frogged to the crossbelt in front of the right side. Corporals and sergeants, and from 1832 men of élite companies, were entitled to a sabre frogged to a second crossbelt. This raises some obscure questions. Regulations of 1831 stated that henceforeward sabre-carrying personnel would continue to wear the bayonet on the pouch crossbelt; this was because a new sabre appeared in that year, the '*glaive*' or '*coupe-choux*', shaped like a Roman *gladius,* and its shape and weight were inconvenient for the old Napoleonic double frog for sabre and bayonet together on the left hip. However, it is recorded that Legion equipment was issued from a number of different stores, and presented rather a motley picture. It seems most unlikely to the author that this despised corps would have been issued at once with the brand new sabre, and far more likely that in some instances at least, the old Napoleonic *sabre-briquet* would have been issued — and thus, the old arrangement of bayonet and sabre frogged together on the second crossbelt, for



The weather conditions suffered by French troops in the Algerian mountains in winter faithfully depicted in this Job study of an infantry sentry in campaign dress (National Army Museum)

appropriate personnel. Nebulous support for the idea that the *sabre-briquet* was issued is given by a naive but interesting plate showing Legion troops storming a Carlist barricade in Spain, 1836-37, published in Brand's *Bürgerkrieg in Spanien*, Leipzig-Baumgarten, 1837. Despite its crudity it has some convincing details, particularly of headgear, and it shows what are apparently grenadiers wearing *sabre-briquets,* though the double frog is not evident.

The old calfskin knapsack was still worn, but now had a cylindrical blue and white cotton ticking cover on top for the rolled *capote*, *habit,* or *veste*, depending on what was being worn. All belts were whitened. The issue weapon was the 1822 flintlock musket, apparently brass-furnished; a shortened version was carried by voltigeurs, and the 1825 *gendarmerie* carbine by musicians and sappers. Scabbards for bayonets and swords were black leather, greased, with brass chapes.

Officers wore a very similar uniform of finer materials. The shako had a 20mm gold top band, and gilt fittings; a surviving example has a flat peak. Turnback ornaments, and epaulette loops, were of gold. Rank was indicated by gold epaulettes; company officers wore these with thin, 80mm fringes, and field officers with thick, 60mm twist fringes:

Sous-lieutenant: Fringed epaulette on right, contre-epaulette on left, gold, both with central red stripe until 1836.

Lieutenant: Fringed on left, contre-epaulette on right, gold, no red stripe.

Capitaine: Two fringed epaulettes, gold.

Capitaine adjudant-major: Two fringed epaulettes, silver.

Major/Chef de bataillon: Fringed epaulette right, contre-epaulette left, gold.

Lieutenant-colonel: Two fringed epaulettes, silver.

Colonel: Two fringed epaulettes, gold.

On duty, but infrequently in the field, officers wore a gold gorget with a silver motif of a cockerel in a wreath. The 1821 infantry officer's sword was worn frogged on the left hip from a concealed belt, with a black cord fist-strap and a gold knot.

In place of the *capote,* officers wore a dark blue *redingote*, or a *collet manteau à capuchon*, i.e. a caped cloak with a hood, quite possibly with sleeves. The *redingote* was a double-breasted overcoat with two rows of seven buttons. Portraits show that a popular alternative was a *capote-tunique*, a plain dark blue frock coat with a tightly-tailored torso, full, pleated skirts, and a single row of buttons.

The *adjudant sous-officier* or warrant officer wore a uniform of officer's cut but of lower quality. He wore a company officer's fringed epaulette on the right, and a *contre-epaulette* on the left, both in silver, with a red stripe down the middle of the strap. His turnback ornaments were gold. Like officers, he wore no re-enlistment chevrons. The top band of his shako was gold with a central red 'light'; Malibran states that from 1830 an officer's sword was frogged to a white external crossbelt. His greatcoat was the officer's dark blue *redingote*.

Shako pompons and plumes worn by officers were as follows. Company officers wore the same as their men. The staff, including warrant officers, wore a 'shaving brush' pompon of red, white and blue with *petite tenue;* and senior officers wore a 310mm plume in the same tricolour scheme for *grande tenue*. At the base of both pompons and plumes was a small 'olive', gold for senior officers, white for the regimental staff, and in battalion colour for battalion staff.

The first known inspection report is by Lt Gen Barrois, 22 October 1832, after inspecting the Legion's Toulon depot. Extracts include the following remarks:

'The uniforms are not very regular. The coat collars are not cut away enough, the coat tails are not ample enough; the greatcoats are not ample enough and their collars are too low . . . NCOs and men wear their hair and sideburns too long . . . The shakos should be better fitted to the men's heads . . . The major equipment is new, and comes from the disbanded Guard . . . The whitening of the belts is poor . . .'

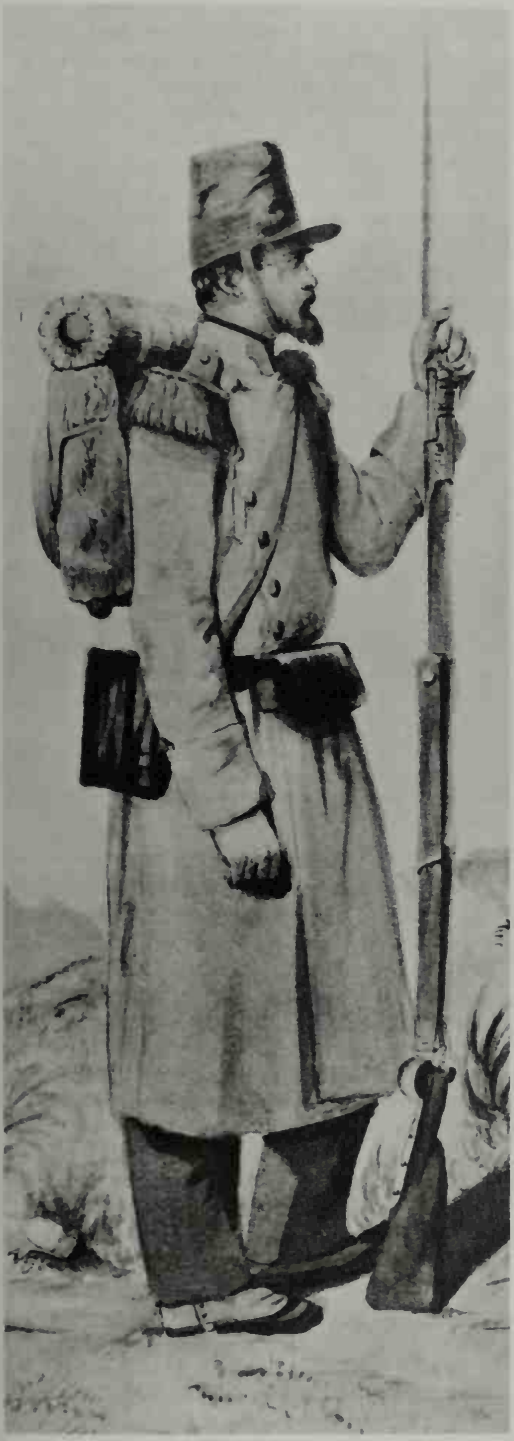
The first item to change was the headgear. The heavy shako was murderously unsuitable for African campaigning, and throughout the expeditionary force it was soon replaced by a wide variety of improvised caps, often made from fatigue caps re-cut and fitted with peaks. Two types seem to have been in simultaneous use in the Legion in the period 1832-33: no examples survive, but the *Livre d'Or* illustrates them with confidence, citing drawings by d'Hecquet. The example which may have been the earlier type was a tall, heavy cap apparently made of uniform cloth (Plate 1, fig. 4); the definitive type was tapered, of lighter construction on a cardboard former (Plate 1, fig. 3). Both had crimson crowns, dark blue bands and piping, peaks, and 'flip-up' leather neck shields at the back. Since they were locally made by the soldiers, we may assume a fair amount of detail variation. The lighter, tapered cap received official blessing in a ministerial circular of 25 July 1833, which recalled the shako and fatigue cap to store in favour of 'a visored cap, of card covered with cloth, rigid and of tall outline, with a crimson crown and a dark blue band.' Officers were to wear the same cap without, at this stage, specific rank lacing; Benigni illustrates an example with simple gold piping replacing the blue piping of the troops (Plate 2, fig. 7).

An inspection report by Gen Comte d'Alton, at Mustapha on 1 December 1833, includes the following comments: 'The men of the Legion were clothed partly at Auxerre, by a Company of Veterans, partly at Pont-Saint-Esprit, others by the Toulon depot, and still others in Africa. Many items were distributed without the least order at Verdun, Bar-le-Duc, and Agen; thus the lack of regularity in the uniforms. The shakos are in good condition, since they have not been worn since May. The Legion, like all other units, has been authorised to use a cap for daily wear; the form of this which they have adopted, conical and slightly raised, to clear the top of the head, is one of the best-made, and most convienient for the climate . . .'

In the field the normal uniform was the cap, the greatcoat, and red or white trousers depending on the weather. The black stock soon disappeared. A wool body-belt was worn for warmth and support under the coat; its bulk was reportedly most unpopular. The knapsack usually contained ten days' rations — biscuit, rice, coffee and sugar — and 60 cartridges, and was piled high with the ticking roll containing the *habit;* a *sac à campement*, a large linen bag serving both as an extra ration stowage and as a sleeping-bag; the second pair of trousers; a large and unwieldy two-man tent, carried by turns; and cooking utensils and large water cans, also by turns. Add to this a bundle of firewood, the heavy wooden-block cartridge pouch and bayonet on the crossbelt, the massive musket, and an individual water canteen or gourd — and the casualty figures from sun-stroke become understandable.

Another inspection report, from Gen Voirol in 1834, is interesting: 'The uniforms are regular.

Right: Probably the earliest painting from life of, specifically, a Foreign Legion enlisted man, this watercolour, formerly in the Brunon Collection, is by an unknown artist, but dates from *circa* .1840 (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)



The cap adopted by the circular of 25 July 1833 has replaced the shako throughout the army of Africa. The Council of Administration of the Legion wishes that a neck flap had been adopted, to protect the soldier from sun and rain,* and that the cap body could be made of leather or of proofed material, since the cardboard quickly disintegrates from humidity, rain and sweat . . . and has to be renewed . . . Uniforms should conform to the ordinance of 2 November 1833; officers' turnback ornaments should be embroidered on cloth of the distinctive colour [red and yellow] . . . The drum-corporal and buglers are not authorised to wear red epaulettes, no more than grenades and bugle-horns on their turnbacks. The keg-canteens should be painted olive green . . . The cloth button which fixes the *martingale* of the cartridge pouch is missing from many of the greatcoats and trousers . . . The Legion appears to be a very fine regiment. The 6th Bn at Bône has very regular uniforms, but the fatigue caps have been converted into visored caps† . . . The stock is little worn in hot weather, and it would be better if it were not worn at all . . . The shako is not worn at all; cases of congestion of the brain are numerous enough already, and that tight, heavy headgear would increase the number . . . The whitening runs from the leather equipment onto the *habits,* deteriorating them. The headquarters company is the only one which keeps the shakos; the rest have been eaten by rats, and sent back to the Toulon depot . . . The men wear the cap.'

Spain, and the 'New Legion'

It was in this uniform that the Legion was packed off to Spain, where supply, payment, food, medical facilities and the treatment of prisoners all left a great deal to be desired. It cannot have been long before uniforms became patched and ragged, and various items were replaced by local equivalents. The red bonnet of the Carlists (Plate 2, fig. 5) is

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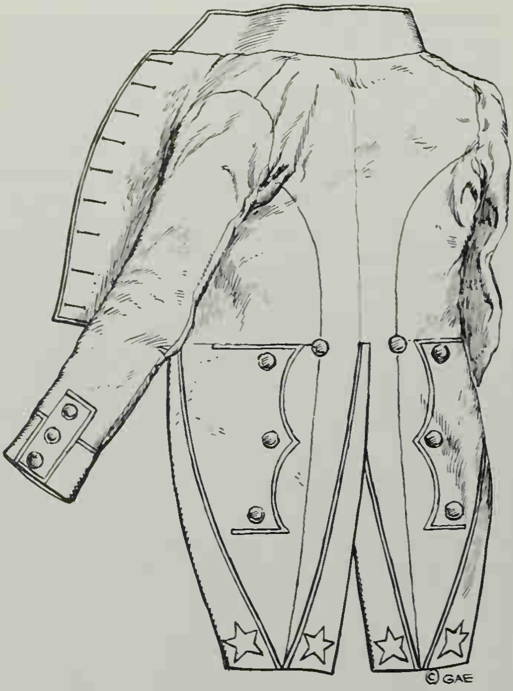
*This suggests that the leather flaps of the 'private enterprise' caps of 1832 were missing from the 'official' caps of the 1833 circular. A black oilcloth cover, with neck-flap, was worn in bad weather, and appears in paintings of *circa* 1837, but perhaps had not generally been adopted in 1834.

†And may thus have been entirely of blue cloth, piped crimson. This may equally have been the case in other Legion units; caps made up before the official circular specified crimson tops would certainly have been used up before new ones were made.

shown by Benigni; *espadrilles* would probably have replaced worn-out boots; and two particularly useful pieces of kit were certainly adopted, and later taken back to Africa by veterans — the haversack, and the belly-pouch for ammunition. Both are shown in contemporary drawings of Spanish soldiers. They also appear in an extremely odd colour plate reproduced in monochrome in *L d'O(1)* and discussed at length by Brunon. His conclusion is that the plate, purporting to show an officer and sergeant of the Legion in Algeria, may depict some kind of 'trials' uniform batch based on the Legion's Spanish experience. The uniforms are dark green faced with red and feature a large, 'formalised' looking version of the Carlist bonnet, a haversack and a belly-pouch. If for no other reason, this oddity is valuable in showing that the French in Africa were aware of the equipment encountered in Spain, and of its advantages.

The belly-pouch, which has many parallels in Spain, Sicily and Corsica, and is far older than the nineteenth century, obviously made a great impact. It was much lighter, handier and less encumbering than the massive wooden-block cartridge box on a crossbelt. It is certain that throughout the Carlist War small numbers of men were moving back and forth between Algeria and Spain — at first reinforcements, later some sick and wounded returning to Africa, and at all times officers coming and going — and when the débris of the Old Legion finally returned it is fair to assume that they brought examples to add to the descriptions carried before them. At all events, Brunon quotes the veteran Commandant Brecht to the effect that shortly after the disembarkation in Algiers of the 'New' Legion in December 1836, *Chef de bataillon* Bedeau of the 1st Bn ordered his men to make themselves belly-pouches of whatever cloth or leather they could find — generally of old coat cloth lined with linen — and to sling them on a waistbelt with a support strap round the neck; the bayonet was also to be frogged to the belt on the right. Brecht mentions the flaps being decorated with piping and company symbols. This sensible reform seems to have spread like wildfire throughout the French infantry in Algeria, and various approximations of the pouch are to be seen in many paintings of scenes only a few months later.

The adoption of a waistbelt rather than a crossbelt on campaign hastened the disappearance of the sabre from the kit of troops in the field. It was heavy, awkward and only useful for chopping brush, anyway. By the late 1830s the Legion seems to have left it almost permanently in store.

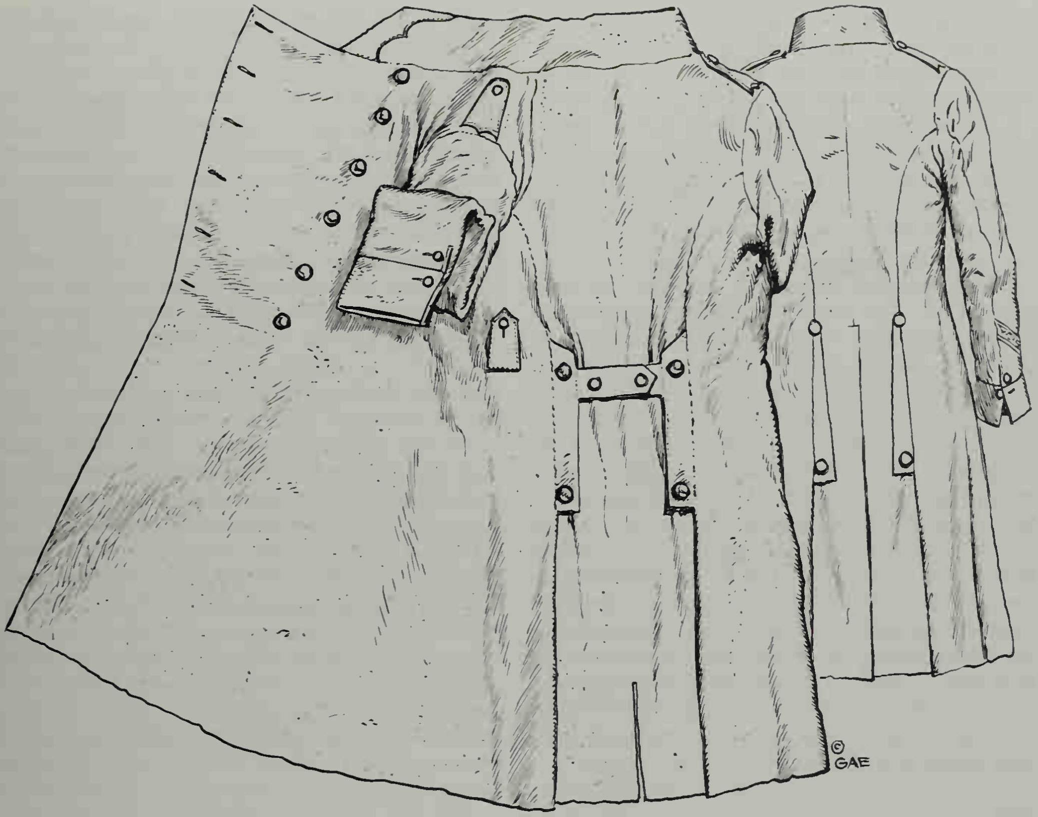


Rear details of the *habit* issued on formation of the Legion in 1831; it was dark blue, with *garance* piping and stars (G. A. Embleton, after Malibran)

The uniforms of the 'New' Legion did not differ from previous practice, barring the absence of *compagnies d'élite* epaulettes until November 1837. That the *veste* and *capote* were now the only garments worn by enlisted ranks is born out by a report by Gen Rullière in that year, noting that corporals and privates did not have *habits;* his request for their issue was apparently ignored.

A ministerial decision of 16 July 1840 called for the manufacture and issue to the infantry in Africa of 30,000 new belly-pouches and belts, to be made from old cartridge boxes and crossbelts; it appears that the 'home made' cloth pouches were not considered satisfactory, although the system itself was approved. Meanwhile General Bugeaud had, of his own accord, ordered the manufacture from Algerian stocks of old equipment of a similar leather equipment. There was thus no shortage of the new leather belly-pouches.

A ministerial decision of 28 July 1840 gave officers rank lacing on their caps. One to five gold



Rear details of 1844 *capote,* showing the martingale for waist adjustment, and (right) the tailored waist of the *sous-officier* version (G. A. Embleton, after Malibran)

soutaches were added round the body just above the edge of the blue band; lieutenant-colonels had the second and fourth in silver, and *adjudant sous-officiers,* one silver *soutache.* In 1841 the trousers were altered in cut from *à pont* to *à brayette.* Brunon quotes extracts of various inspection reports of the 1840s. In 1841 the 1er RE (Régiment Etrangère) had 'caps of different types', and the 2^{e} RE had quantities of caps dating back to the 'Old' Legion, feelingly described as '*horribles*'. In 1842 it was reported that the change-over to percussion muskets (still smooth-bore) was complete in both regiments. A new cap is also mentioned, issued by state magazines; of the usual conical shape, it was of leather covered with cloth, in the old colours but with a leather top surface varnished white (Plate 3, fig. 8). It was reportedly heavy and unpopular, and a return to light cloth and card caps was requested. In the same year there are bitter words about the crossbelt cartridge box, which is compared unfavourably with the belly-pouch; so some must still have been in use.

General Bugeaud's famous 'flying columns' left greatcoats and knapsacks in store, and marched in their *vestes,* with rations and cartridges for a few days rolled in the *sac à campement,* slung round the body (Plate 3, fig. 8). In 1843 cockades were ordered fitted to the caps, with blue piping loops and brass buttons.

A ministerial decision of 25 July 1843 gave the whole infantry a visored *bonnet de police* of dark blue, piped crimson; it was about 160mm high at the back, 140mm at the front, and 130–150mm across the top, with a 50mm band. Piping followed the top edge of the band, the edge of the top surface, and was added in four vertical lines joining the two, at front, back and sides. The black peak was of rounded shape, apparently. The *bonnet* was incorporated in general uniform regulations of 29 February 1844, but whether the Legion ever actually substituted this regulation cap for its crimson-topped *casquettes d'Afrique* is a point of some controversy; officers certainly did not, and it seems to be the concensus that the blue *bonnet* was not worn much, if at all, by the Legion. It may be relevant that an inspection report of 1845 mentions that four different kinds of cap were in simultaneous use in the Legion.

There were few changes in the February 1844 regulations. The *veste* is officially described as bearing epaulettes in flank companies; fusiliers apparently did not wear their *galettes* on it. Malibran describes the *capote* of that year as 'iron grey, lightly blued', with two rows of six buttons, the space between them tapering from 240mm at the top pair to 140mm at the bottom. Crimson collar *écussons* are prescribed; the improved arrangement of the rear buttons is illustrated herewith. A new shako is described; see under 1845 regulations below. The *adjudant sous-officier* was now to carry the 1816 sabre. The Legion's buttons now bore the regimental number in the centre, rather than a star. For officers, the 1844 regulations list a dark blue waisted *capote* with two rows of seven buttons, the space between them tapering from 340mm down to 100mm. The red-topped *casquette* with rank lacing is confirmed.

1845

Another set of infantry regulations dated 2 March 1845 made radical changes to the appearance of the French soldier. It is emphasised that Brunon believed that tunics were not issued in the Legion to ranks below sergeant, and that the use of the shako must have been limited to very occasional parades in major garrisons, if it was issued at all.

The new royal blue tunic, piped crimson, was cut like a frock coat, tight in the body but with full skirts reaching the knee. It had a standing cutaway collar, nine front buttons, cuffs, cuff-patches and epaulettes as on the old *habit;* and two crimson-piped *pattes Soubise* at the back, each with two buttons (see illustration). The collar bore a red grenade and a yellow bugle-horn, respectively, in grenadier and voltigeur companies. It also had a crimson-piped, blue cloth belt loop buttoning upwards on the left side.

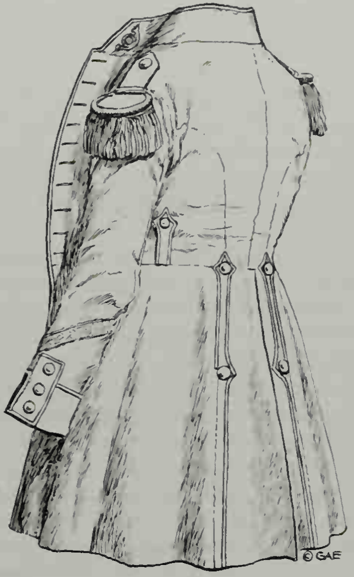
The shako was of leather, the body covered with royal blue cloth; a black band at the bottom measured 25mm deep, and the top surface was black leather, as was the chinstrap. The dished black peak was green underneath, and was 60mm deep at the centre. The shako had a forward-sloping appearance; the front was 170mm high, the slanted back 200mm. It had a crimson top band 20mm wide and 3mm crimson pipings down the back and sides. A 58mm diameter cockade, with red on the outside, was fixed to the front at the top, and below it a brass plate in the shape of a crowned wreath with foliate supporters each side at the bottom. A smooth central cartouche bore a cut-out regimental number, surrounded by the unit name. Pompons were fitted to the front top edge, partly obscuring the cockade. Flank companies wore red and yellow 'shaving brushes'. Fusilier companies wore brass company numbers on elipse-shaped pompons in blue, red and yellow respectively for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Bn; the HQ company wore plain red. Officers wore the same shako, and company officers the same pompons; staff officers wore tricolour 'shaving brushes', the 'flame' of red surrounded by white and the ball of blue.

Officers of élite companies wore gold collar ornaments. Gorgets and epaulettes were still worn with the tunic. In place of the *capote* and *redingote,* officers were now to wear an attractive three-quarter length dark blue coat termed a *caban;* Morel says it had an attached hood, Malibran — though writing of the army as a whole, rather than the Legion — says it did not. Coloured linings of red and perhaps white were normal. The loose *caban,* designed to be worn over a tunic and cut generously to accommodate epaulettes underneath, had a small stand-and-fall collar, two rear vents of 400–450mm length and two vertical pocket slits low on the sides. Collar, front and bottom edges, pockets and vents were edged with black silk ribbon. This was worked into trefoil knots at the top of the rear vents, which closed by two small black buttons, and at both ends of the pockets. Fastening was by means of four black silk quatrefoil knots spaced down each side of the chest, each with a black-covered 'olive' or toggle and a black silk cord loop fixed to the centre — i.e., eight toggles and loops in all. There was also a long loop from above and 'inside' the top quatrefoil on the left to an 'olive' similarly placed on the right. The bottom of the cuffs on the inside face were edged with silk ribbon, which rose on the outside face into a point *en accolade;* above this ranking was worn in a Hungarian knot. Gold lace 3mm wide was worn in from one to five bands according to rank: lieutenant-colonels had the second and fourth in silver; majors had the bottom one in silver, to identify them from *chefs de bataillon;* the *capitaine adjudant-major* had the second in silver, and the *adjudant sous-officier* wore a single black silk lace.

Officers now wore exterior belts over the tunic. The everyday belt was 45mm wide, of black leather, with two scabbard suspenders and a gilt 55mm square plaque bearing the motif of 'the Genius of France'. The belt of *grande tenue* was the same width, with four narrow lengthways strips of gold lace and three of midnight blue alternating. The new 1845 sabre had a black cord fist-strap, with a black 'olive' for *petite tenue* and a gold 'pear' knot for *grande* tenue. *Adjudants sous-officiers* wore a sabre with the officer's *petite tenue* belt and knot at all times.

By far the most important reform of 1845 was, however, the equipment. The crossbelt disappeared forever, and in its place came a new belt set, in whitened leather until an order of 14 April 1848 to blacken it. A 55mm waistbelt was worn, with a 60–65mm square brass buckle plate, and two brass slides, each pierced at the top. Frogs for the bayonet and, if worn, the 1831 sabre were fitted to the left side. A new cartridge box incorporating a percussion-cap pocket was worn on a broad leather loop on the back of the belt, slightly to the right. The 1845 regulations also specified a most far-sighted item — a set of 'Y'-straps, which buckled to the back of the belt and hooked to the slides at the front.

These *bretelles de giberne* were withdrawn in 1848, in favour of *contre-sanglons;* these were shorter straps which hooked to the slides of the belt in the same way, but instead of passing over the shoulders to the back of the belt, they buttoned to the knapsack shoulder straps at the front of the shoulder. Whether the Legion was actually issued with the *bretelles* between 1845 and 1848 is uncertain. The ministerial circular of 14 April 1848 must be seen as a backward step; when troops were not wearing the knapsack, the only support for the belt, cartridge box, bayonet and — when worn — sabre was the cloth belt loop on the left of the *veste* and *capote*, and the neck strap of the belly-pouch, when worn.



Rear detail of 1845 tunic, here as worn by voltigeur company sergeant: dark blue with *garance* piping, yellow collar ornament and epaulettes, and gold stripe trimmed red (G. A. Embleton, after Malibran)

In about the mid-1840s it seems that the light blue cravat began, in practice, to oust the black stock; the élite companies also began to decorate the *écussons* of their *vestes* with dark blue emblems. On 17 January 1850 a ministerial order finally supressed the old 'African cap' in favour of the smaller, soft-topped *bonnet de police à visiere*, which would henceforward be made in the old colour scheme — crimson top, blue band and piping (Plate 3, fig. 10). A ministerial decision of 30 March 1852 replaced the tunic *contre-epaulettes* of centre companies (and thus the three-point *capote* shoulderstraps) with green, fringed epaulettes with red 'crescents'. Late in 1852 the change of government was marked by a new Imperial eagle shako-plate.

2

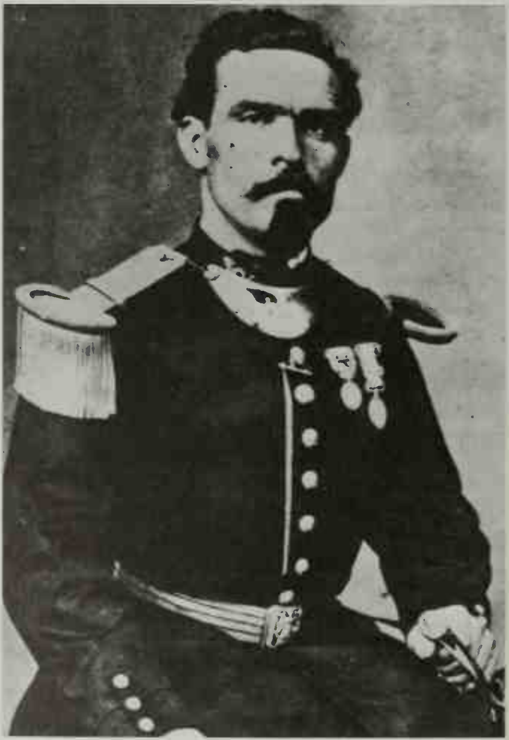
The Crimea and Italy

In May 1854 an Imperial decision transferred the bulk of the Legion to the Army of the Orient for the Crimean War. It appears that one battalion of the 1er RE remained in Algeria, the other two embarking at Oran in early June and sailing for Gallipoli. The 2e RE embarked at Philippeville later that month, one battalion being directed to Bastia, Corsica to form a depot, and the other two sailing for Gallipoli. Both were assembled near Varna in July, and there they were ravaged by the cholera which swept through the Allied armies, some 180 officers and men being laid low.

A *bataillon d'élite* was formed under Cdt Nayral, consisting of the grenadier and voltigeur companies of all four battalions, and shipped out for the Crimea early in September 1854. The battalion distinguished itself at the storming of the heights of Alma on 20 September, attracting the praise of the divisional commander, Gen Canrobert, for the typically African dash they displayed in the assault; 60 officers and men were killed or wounded.

In October the remaining bulk of the two regiments arrived in the Crimea, and the flank companies were absorbed into them once more. They camped at Strelitzka Bay, forming a brigade of the 5th Division, and were mainly employed on second-line duties — building batteries, digging trenches, and transporting supplies up the line. The 1er RE successfully drove off a heavy Russian attack on their trenches on 5 November; this action, which was linked to the Russian effort at Inkerman, cost the Legion about 162 casualties. For the remainder of the miserable winter the Legion shivered in the freezing trenches before Sebastopol; winter clothing and fuel were in very short supply, and the Legion made a name for itself by ingenious improvisation and rapacious foraging. There were numerous small actions, notably an enemy attack on the trenches of La Quarantaine on the night of 19-20 January 1855.

When the Allied offensive got under way at the end of April 1855 the Legion played a full part in the various attacks which gradually hacked away the Russian positions covering Sebastopol. The commander of the 1er RE, Col Viénot, fell at the head of his légionnaires during a night attack on 1–2 May, one of about 200 casualties suffered by the Legion in this successful assault; of eighteen officers in the 1er RE, fourteen had been killed or



Sous-lieutenant Blanc, photographed in 1866, wearing the nine-button tunic of the 1845 regulations. Note voltigeur company ornaments on collar, parade belt, gorget, and proportions of epaulettes. A watch-chain is apparently attached to the top visible button-hole (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*) wounded by the end of the action. On 7 June the Legion helped secure the 'White Works' in the key sector, the Malakoff. On 8 September a hundred volunteers from the 1er RE led the assault columns which finally took the Malakoff. On 10 September Gen Bazaine was named commandant of the abandoned city of Sebastopol, now occupied by the Legion Brigade: a proud moment for the veteran of the ambush at Macta and the blood-bath of Barbastro. The siege and assaults had cost the Legion a total of 78 officers and 1,625 men killed and wounded.

After earning themselves a second nickname, 'The Cabbage Brigade', in the course of a major foraging expedition in the valley of Baidar, the 'Leatherbellies' of the Legion went into winter quarters before Sebastopol. An armistice was concluded in the spring of 1856, and on 6 July of that year the Crimean veterans disembarked at Oran, and marched home to Sidi-bel-Abbès. There must have been many who expressed a proper and soldierly disgust with certain decisions taken in their absence.

Napoleon III was a monarch much given to showy gesture. Doubtless inspired by the traditional loyalty to their French paymasters of Swiss mercenaries down the centuries, he announced in January 1855 the formation of a 'Second Foreign Legion', composed entirely of Swiss and commanded by a protégé of his, one Col Oschenbein. The ambitious establishment was set at two regiments of two battalions each, with a Tirailleur battalion of ten companies. Their special identity was to be marked by the issue of uniforms in green rather than the standard dark blue. The two infantry regiments and the Tirailleur battalion began to organise at Dijon, Besançon and Auxonne respectively, but recruitment fell far below what had been envisaged. After a year the 1st Rgt, 2nd Legion had only 450 men in seven nominal companies, the 2nd Rgt had 500 in six companies and the sharpshooter battalion had 200 in three companies.

In mid-April 1856 the Emperor was given a report recommending changes in the organisation of his foreign troops, and a decree swiftly followed. From 16 April the 'First Foreign Legion' (the Crimean force) and the 'Second Foreign Legion' (the Swiss) were to become the First and Second Foreign Regiments, each of two battalions of eight companies, with the Tirailleurs who had been recruited formed into two companies attached to the Swiss regiment. The gratuitous insult was that it was the Swiss newcomers who were now to be the 'First Foreign Regiment', and the scarred veterans of the Crimea who were to be relegated to second place!

The new 1er RE was organised at Sathonay in June 1856 and shipped out from Toulon for Philippeville on 6 July. On 8 August, at Sidi-bel-Abbès, the old Crimea regiments were disbanded and their non-Swiss personnel instantly formed into the new 2^{e} RE.

Between April and June 1857 one battalion of the 1er and two of the 2^{e} RE took part in a large-scale French drive to pacify the rugged tribal refuges of the Kabylie mountains. It was the sixteenth attempt since 1838 to penetrate this lunar landscape in force. During the Crimean War the tribes had taken full advantage of the weakened African garrisons and a major lesson was considered overdue. Now four converging columns totalling 35,000 men struggled painfully through the blazing mountains, resisted at every crest and pass by determined and dangerous war-parties. On 24 June, under the eyes of Gen MacMahon, the two battalions of légionnaires from the 2^{e} RE distinguished themselves. Two regiments of Line infantry failed to carry a heavily defended ridge-line at Ischeriden. Within thirty minutes of the order to advance the légionnaires were in possession of the ridge; they had not fired a single shot during the long struggle up the slope under fire, keeping the cartridge 'up the spout' for the moment when it could do some good, as they reached the crest. They then finished the job with the bayonet. Another three weeks of mopping up saw Kabylia nominally pacified at last — though it would remain a natural base for dissidents throughout France's occupation of Algeria. The Swiss 1er RE marched back to Sétif, and the 2^{e} RE to Sidi-bel-Abbès. A period of relatively quiet service followed, with the eternal road-building punctuated by occasional small-scale police actions.

In 1859 Napoleon III once more sent his armies on to the international stage, declaring war on the Austrian occupation of Italy, in support of Sardinia. In April the 1er RE, still weak in numbers, was transferred to Bastia, Corsica, to recruit and set up a depot. The 2^{e} RE formed itself into four battalions, left one in depot at Sidi-bel-Abbès, and sailed with three — totalling 60 officers and 1,400 men — for Marseilles. The two regiments were reunited at Genoa in May; with the 2^{e} Zouaves they formed Castagny's 2nd Brigade of Espinasse's 2nd Division of MacMahon's 2nd Corps.

The Italian campaign ended in victory, but it was a victory won by the courage and endurance of the soldiers and subalterns rather than the brilliance of the generals. Trained in the rough and ready school of African campaigning, where dash, ruthlessness, audacity, and *baraka** could usually be relied upon to win the day, they were not at their best in the more demanding environment of large scale European operations against a modern army. Both major engagements degenerated into bloody slogging-matches. The 2nd Division of the 2nd Corps played a major part in the victory at Magenta on 4 June, advancing through wooded and cultivated terrain thick with Austrian outposts. Casualties were heavy, and during the fighting for the position at Marcallo Col de Chabrière fell at the head of the 2ᵉ RE. In all the 1ᵉʳ RE lost 49 officers and men out of 500 committed, and the 2ᵉ RE 259 out of 1,400, in the course of a day-long battle which ended in bitter house-to-house fighting.

After a liberator's welcome from the people of Milan, the Legion divided. The Swiss 1ᵉʳ RE remained there, in a less than triumphant attempt to recruit itself up to strength, while the 2ᵉ RE continued with the army in a two-week pursuit of the retreating Austrians through incessant rain. They were in the advance guard which ran up against the enemy at dawn on 24 June near Solferino; and fought in the Cassiano area during the bloody battle which followed. This victory brought the campaign to an end and an armistice was concluded on 7 July 1859.

On 14 August, in one of the most glittering displays of the Second Empire, the Army of Italy paraded through Paris, and the légionnaires of the 2ᵉ RE began a stormy love affair between the Legion and the Paris crowds which continues to this day. Neat in specially-issued new uniforms, the scarred and sun-tanned veterans swung through the boulevardes in a hail of flowers. On the 19th they boarded the transport *Panama* at Toulon, and three days later disembarked at Mers-el-Kébir for the march back to Sidi-bel-Abbès. The Swiss regiment had shipped directly from Genoa to Corsica on 7 August.

On 14 October 1859 an Imperial decree brought the Swiss experiment to an end. From that day, recruitment was to be open to all nationalities in both regiments, each would muster three battalions of eight companies, and all differences of uniform disappeared, the traditional blue and red of the 2ᵉ RE becoming universal. In February 1860 the 1ᵉʳ RE left Bastia and sailed for Algeria, being posted to Philippeville, Bougie and Constantine.

Uniforms 1854-60

The uniforms of the '1st Foreign Legion', later the '2nd Foreign Regiment' in the Crimea and Italy did not introduce any radical changes.

An order of 17 January 1855 changed the legend on the buttons to '*Première Légion Etrangère*'. A ministerial decision of 18 January 1856 introduced steel scabbards for the new officers' sabres of the previous year. (The use of sabres other than the regulation infantry patterns was quite widespread, as attested by portraits; the model prescribed for officers of Zouaves and Tirailleurs Algériens, and that of the Chasseurs à pied with its three-branch guard were both popular in the Legion.)

In the atrocious conditions of the Crimean winter, regulations were quickly subordinated to the serious business of staying alive; all kinds of more or less raffish outer garments appeared in the ranks, either 'liberated' under the time-honoured 'System D', or improvised from blankets, canvas, straw and anything else that came to hand. The flannel body-belt in red or blue was now tolerated outside the coat. The Ministry of War rushed through a caped greatcoat, the '*criméene*', in a number of colours and button styles (see Plate 4, fig. 11). An order of 30 January 1855 introduced a new *capote* based on Crimean experience; full-cut to accommodate the tunic or *veste* underneath, it had two rows of five buttons and a stand-and-fall 'Saxe' collar which could be turned up over neck and ears. Whether it ever reached the Legion is uncertain.

The toughness, and sense of soldierly priorities displayed by the Legion in the Crimea is recalled by the story of the veteran légionnaire caught parading in the snow with his bare feet polished black, in an optimistic attempt to disguise the fact

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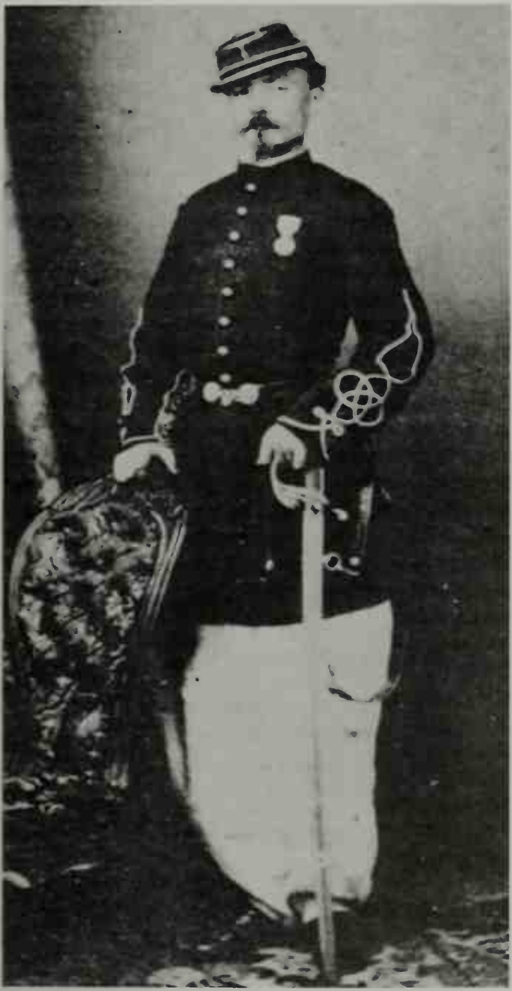
*Arab word roughly translated as 'luck', but carrying a sense of making one's luck for oneself — attracting the favour of Allah by one's courage. It passed into the French military vocabulary in Africa, where a successful soldier often needed large supplies of it.



Sous-lieutenant Lenoir, photographed in 1867, is seen wearing the Zouave officer's tunic very widely adopted as campaign and everyday service dress by infantry officers of the Second Empire. Note sleeve details, and very full-cut trousers, here apparently the white hot-weather type (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

that he had swapped his boots for alcohol.

In the uniform descriptions of 1 January 1858 the 'Saxe' collared greatcoat gave way to one with a stand collar decorated with dark blue *écussons*, and two rows of six buttons, the space between the rows tapering from 220mm at the top down to 110mm. The same regulations specify for this regiment a tunic collar of crimson, piped blue, in place of the blue, piped crimson of 1845. The proportions of the *képi* were slightly reduced, and the squared peak became more regular in shape. The trousers acquired two side pockets.

A new knapsack was introduced in 1856 and Benigni shows it in use in the Legion by 1859; still of natural calfskin, it had a new interior design and some new strapping. The most noticeable change was the disappearance of the cylindrical *étui à mille raies*; the greatcoat could now be strapped round the edges of the pack in a horseshoe roll. The leather belly-pouch was worn in both the Crimea and Italy and in the former campaign it earned the Legion the nickname 'Leatherbellies'.

On campaign in the 1850s the use of a haversack, though not regulation, was tolerated; of beige or brown cloth, it was apparently fastened with a buckled strap at this date. Alongside the rectangular tin *bidon* with a central spout, two other types appeared. A proofed leather flask was issued in the early 1850s, and late in the decade a rectangular tin pattern with two spouts, normally covered in coat cloth like the single-spout version.

Weapons probably varied in detail according to model. The 1842 and 1853 percussion muskets were both 1475mm (4ft 10¾in) long; models of the same years with a 'T' suffix were 1421mm (4ft 8in) long; and in 1857 the first rifled version appeared, and older models were called in progressively for rifling. One may presume that in the Crimea and Italy all corporals and sergeants, and men of the élite companies generally wore the 1831 sabre, since they were serving alongside Line troops under European conditions.

Regulations allowed only sappers to wear full beards; flank company personnel were supposed to wear moustaches and *mouches* — the small lip-beards fashionable at that time — and centre companies were limited to moustaches. In Algeria, légionnaires on campaign in dry country were not badgered with these pettifogging details, and in the Crimea anything that gave a little warmth was tolerated.

It was the officers who brought to the battlefields of the Second Empire a new touch of elegance. From some time early in the 1850s infantry officers on campaign apparently took into virtually universal use the tunic of Zouave officers. Of dark blue, this was normally worn open over a dark blue waistcoat with many small gold buttons, a white shirt and a black bow tie with long ends. It was usually single-breasted, but examples with two rows of buttons are shown in some portraits. It was closely tailored in the torso, with wide, many-pleated skirts reaching to just above the knee. The low standing collar, rounded at the corners, often bore gold élite company emblems; indeed, so many portraits show grenades, in particular, that one may speculate that their use was not strictly confined to present officers of grenadier companies.

The sleeves were most striking. Gold and silver Hungarian knots, in the sequence described earlier for the *caban*, reached almost to the shoulder. A long vent split the sleeve up the back of the forearm, edged with a continuation of the gold lace of the Hungarian knots. The vent was loosely fastened with loops of 3mm gold lace around eleven 6mm gold ball buttons, and there was a visible red lining. Neither epaulettes nor gorgets were worn with this tunic. Swordbelts were worn under it, often over a red or blue sash reaching high on the body (see Plate 6).

The wearing of extremely full-cut trousers became popular among officers at this period; eventually they approached the proportions of the Arab *seroual*, being tapered sharply at the ankle and strapped under the instep. In the Legion both crimson and white versions seem to have been worn, as appropriate to the climate.

The Swiss

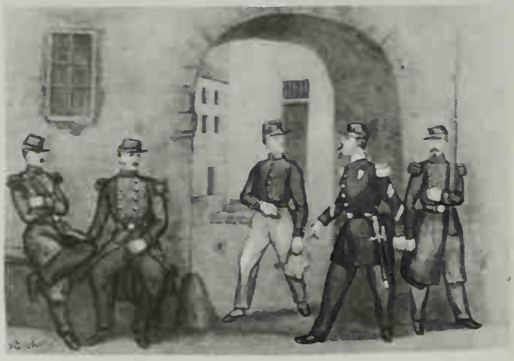
The complex organisational history of the short-lived Swiss element is discussed above; to re-cap on the essentials, their titles were:

17 January 1855 . . .	2ᵉ Légion Etrangère, of two regiments
3 February 1855 . . .	Bataillon de Tirailleurs added to 2ᵉ Légion Etrangère
14 April 1856 . . .	Becomes 1ᵉʳ Régiment Etranger, with two integral Tirailleur companies

The uniforms stipulated by the regulations of 22 February 1855 for the new French-based unit included items long forgotten by the légionnaires from Africa — shakos and tunics. The long-skirted frock-tunic of the 1845 regulations was to be worn, in green, piped with crimson; the collar was yellow, piped green, and in flank companies bore a red grenade or bugle-horn. Cuffs were crimson, piped green, and cuff-patches green, piped crimson. Fringed epaulettes were passed under green *brides* piped crimson: scarlet, yellow, and green with scarlet crescents respectively for grenadiers, voltigeurs, and fusiliers. Buttons were brass, with a central regimental number and '*2ᵉ Légion Etrangère*' round the edge. The *veste* was green, with red grenades or bugle-horns on the collar for flank companies. Trousers were crimson. The *capote* was 'iron grey', with two rows of five buttons; the collar was in stand-and-fall 'Saxe' style, without insignia. The shako, now with brass chinscales, was green with a yellow band and piping, its brass plate in the 1852 Imperial eagle style bearing a cut-out regimental number surrounded by the same legend as the buttons. The *bonnet de police à visière* (henceforward in this book termed *képi*, for clarity, although this slang name was not official usage until 1874) was green with a crimson band and piping. Equipment was of standard pattern, in black leather.

Officers were to wear exactly the same uniform as those of the '1st Foreign Legion', but with green replacing blue at all points.

On the same date, the uniforms of the Tirailleur battalion were prescribed. The tunic was green piped with yellow, including all details. Epaulettes were green with yellow crescents. (Interestingly, Morel quotes the regulation as stipulating cuff-patches, while Benigni's plate in *L d'O (1)* follows a watercolour by Brecht, who served in the Swiss Legion, in showing pointed Polish cuffs without patches.) The *veste* was green, without piping; the cuffs were to be pointed. Instead of the *capote*, the light battalion was to wear a *collet manteau à*



Watercolour by *Adjudant* Escher showing the Swiss regiment of the Legion, 1855–59. Full descriptions of uniform regulations are given in the text. Left to right, this picture shows: two fusiliers with green collars and red *écussons* on their blue-grey *capotes*; a fusilier in a green *veste* and white trousers; a sergeant of voltigeurs in a green tunic with a yellow collar; and a grenadier, as the fusiliers but with red epaulettes (*Livre d'Or Képi Blanc*) *capuchon* — an elbow-length cape with attached hood — in iron grey, in the style of the Chasseurs à pied. Iron grey trousers were piped yellow down the outer seam. White metal buttons bore a bugle-horn surrounded by *'2ᵉ Légion Etrangère'*. The shako was the same as that worn by the Line battalions, but with a bugle-horn replacing the number in the centre of the plate and a black-green cock's feather plume instead of pompons. The *képi* was green all over, piped yellow. Equipment was of Chasseur pattern. The *carabinier* company, equivalent to line grenadiers, were to be armed with the model 1840 *fusil de rempart allégé,* and the rest of the battalion with the model 1842–53 *carabine à tige,* both with sabre-bayonets.

Officers were to wear a similar tunic to their men, with silver epaulettes. The *caban* was to be green, lined sky-blue. The shako was to be as that worn by the men; the *képi* was also green, piped and laced silver; the parade belt was to have silver, rather than gold lace. Chasseur trousers were to be worn. The new 1855 sabre was stipulated; note that these regulations mention a steel scabbard for officers of both Line and Tirailleur units of the 2nd Legion, although a ministerial order did not specify steel scabbards for infantry officers at large until 18 January the following year.

For further comment on these uniforms, see the commentary on Plate 5.

The Imperial decree of 14 April 1856, re-naming the Swiss as the 1ᵉʳ RE, required no more than the alteration of the buttons. In June that year, prior to their embarkation for Algeria, the Swiss troops returned to store their tunics and shakos; only officers and sergeants retained the tunic, but not, apparently, the shako. Henceforward they would march and fight in *veste, capote,* and *képi**. Once the whole Legion had assembled in Africa, the practice of wearing a brass regimental number on the *képi* band was noted in both the 'green Swiss 1st' and the 'blue old 2nd', if one may so term them for clarity! Brecht is quoted in *Livre d'Or(1)* to the effect that this custom was long-lived, and was observed after the suppression of the national and uniform colour differences between the two regiments; it presumably cannot have survived the amalgamation of the regiments in December 1861.

On 1 January 1858 an official description of the uniforms of all infantry regiments was published. Morel quotes the Legion section in full; since little had changed from the uniforms described in detail above, we need not, but there are points of interest.

It seems rather doubtful that the 'Saxe' collared *capote* was ever actually worn by the Swiss; certainly the eyewitness watercolours by *Adjudant* Escher do not show them (and see, once more, the commentary on Plate 5). At all events the 1858 description lists a standing-collar *capote* entirely of 'blued iron grey' with green *écussons.* The *veste* is described as green including the collar and *écussons,* and there is no mention of élite company ornaments.

The Imperial decree of 14 October 1859, opening recruitment in the 1ᵉʳ RE to all nationalities and bringing its organisation into line with that of the 2ᵉ RE, also supressed the green uniform. Henceforward both regiments were to wear the blue and crimson of the 2ᵉ RE, differenced only by the brass *képi* number.

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*Brunon states that the Swiss 'never' wore the *cartouchière d'Afrique,* the belly-pouch. Whether he means this literally, or merely refers to their year in France before sailing for Africa, is unclear. The former interpretation seems odd, but this absolute phrase is repeated in different editions of *Livre d'Or.*

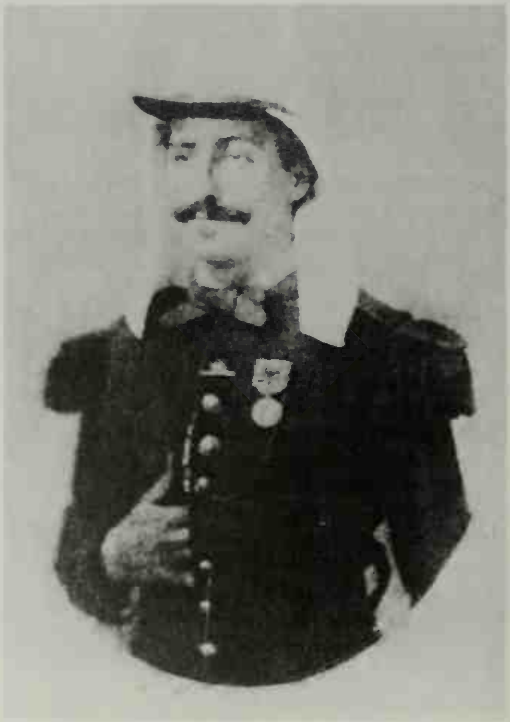
3

From Vera Cruz to the Gare du Nord

In December 1861 the 1er RE was finally absorbed completely by the 2^{e} RE, the resulting 'Régiment Etranger' still being referred to as the Legion in popular usage. The three eight-company battalions, based at the thriving little town of Sidi-bel-Abbès, started a monotonous round of road-building, tax-gathering and routine patrolling, enlivened only by a brisk campaign against the irrepressible Beni Snassen in the hills near the Moroccan border. Their absence from the list of units earmarked for Mexico was thus deeply resented.

The Mexican adventure was the masterpiece of Napoleon III's 'foreign policy by melodrama'. That unhappy land had just staggered out of its latest round of bloody civil wars under the austere leadership of the reformer Juarez. Defeated conservatives fled to France and tried to persuade Napoleon to intervene. Mexico's cancellation of foreign debts provided the excuse for an international expedition to Vera Cruz in January 1862; the British and Spanish soon decided that they were on a hiding to nothing and sailed home. France remained, and reinforced; Napoleon had been dreaming Imperial dreams again. While the United States was fully preoccupied by its civil war, why not implant a Catholic, monarchist regime in Central America as a counterbalance to the expansion of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant republicanism? Why not create an axis between old and new worlds, bringing France valuable raw materials and a huge new market? There was even a spare emperor handy — the Archduke Maximilian, unemployed sailor brother of the Emperor of Austria. Sadly, the local population failed to flock to the banner of a brand new foreign monarchy with the enthusiasm promised by the conservative renegades; indeed, they showed a distressing tendency to support Juarez, even when subjected to an educational programme of massacre and atrocity by the conservatives who were trying to 'prepare the way' for Maximilian. The French Army found the march from the coast to the capital a long-drawn-out business.

At Sidi-bel-Abbès enthusiasm outran prudence; the junior officers, a notably lively bunch at this time, petitioned the Emperor direct. Stern punishment followed — and shortly thereafter the order for a *régiment de marche* to be formed for Mexico, comprising two seven-company battalions



A légionnaire photographed in Mexico in 1865. This is probably the earliest surviving photograph of an enlisted man of the Legion. Note *képi* with one-piece white cover and neck-flap, 1860 tunic with fusilier epaulettes, and civilian bow-tie, a personal affectation for the purposes of this studio portrait (*Livre d'Or Képi Blanc*) and an HQ, with 2,000 officers and men in all. On 10 February 1863 the 1st and 2nd Bns set sail at Mers-el-Kébir for a campaign which they fondly imagined would bring them gold, glory, and exotic female company. The 3rd Bn remained, cursing, at home.

Disembarkation at Vera Cruz on 28 March brought the first disillusion. Almost deserted, the squalid port was ravaged by cholera and yellow fever, and the légionnaires were ordered to smoke cigars constantly to ward off the deadly mosquitoes. They were told that the 20^e Chasseurs, landing 820 strong, had lost 600 men dead or prostrated by disease in thirteen days at Vera Cruz and on the march through the 'Hot Lands' inland. Shortly afterwards they were informed that the Legion would not, after all, be marching to the Orizaba plateau to take part in the siege of Puebla, but would remain in these pestilential coastal flats, strung out along the bandit-haunted road in security detachments. Their responsibility was the section from the coast inland to Chiquihuite, 90km (56 miles) away on the far edge of the 'Hot Lands'. Detachments were left at Tejeria, Matamolo, and Le Soledad (2nd Bn), and at the important bridge of Paso del Macho, at Chiquihuite, and at Atoyac. Chiquihuite was the headquarters, with four companies of the 1st Bn. The Legion settled down to their miserable duty, which cost them 800 dead before the end of 1863, most of them from fever.

On 29 April 1863 Col Jeanningros received word that a convoy of siege material and gold bullion for the army at Puebla would be coming up from Le Soledad next day. He sent the duty company, the 3rd, back down the track to meet it, to ensure that the route was free of ambushes — Juarist irregulars prowled the scrub-jungle along the coast road, and their intelligence network was ubiquitous. The 3rd Coy was reduced by fever to 62 men without an officer, so three officers of the staff volunteered to take the duty: the battalion adjudant, Capt Jean Danjou, the paymaster, Sous-lt Vilain, and the standard-bearer, Sous-lt Maudet. All three were veterans; Danjou had been decorated with the cross of the *Légion d'honneur* for gallantry in the Crimea, and had fought in Italy. The explosion of a signal-gun in the Crimea had cost him his left hand, and he now wore a wooden replacement. Both the junior officers were ex-rankers; Vilain had been decorated for gallantry as an NCO at Magenta in 1859.

The company marched from Chiquihuite an hour after midnight on 30 April, all on foot, with two mules carrying rations and extra ammunition. Before dawn they reached the grenadiers at Paso del Macho; Capt Saussier, the commander, offered to detach some of his men, in view of the possibility of ambush, but Danjou refused to strip this small but key post any further. He marched on, and around 6 am the 3rd Coy halted for coffee in scrubland just short of Palo Verde. The men had poured their canteens into the dixies and were waiting for the water to boil when the sentries sighted Mexican cavalry to the north-west: 800 of them, led by the Juarist Col Milan, intent on ambushing the convoy.

Standing to arms, the Legion company moved westwards, clearing as they went the ruins of the nearby hamlet of Camaron — or 'Camerone' in its French spelling. They encountered a large body of enemy horse, and were forced to fall back on these ruins in hollow square; their volleys kept the enemy at bay, but the ammunition mules took fright and kicked their way out of the square. During a confused running fight in thick cactus scrub some 16 men became separated. The remainder arrived at the tumbledown *haçienda* of Camerone, and, harassed by snipers actually inside the main building, began to barricade the perimeter. It comprised a 45 m (150 ft) square enclosure, with ruined lean-to sheds along the inner walls; and a half-ruined but still stout building with several rooms, one of which was occupied by Juarist snipers. There were two open gateways and a third breach in the courtyard walls. The enemy surrounded this makeshift fort, and an offer of quarter if the légionnaires surrendered was refused. At about 9.30 am the first major attack was launched, a rather badly co-ordinated rush by the dismounted horsemen, who were well-armed with carbines, some of them modern repeaters.

The blow-by-blow account of Camerone is to be found in many other books, and is indeed read aloud to every Legion unit, wherever it may be, on the anniversary; sadly, there is no space here for details. The essential facts are that this handful of men, armed with single-shot percussion rifles, with empty canteens and tortured by heat and thirst, under fire from all sides including the building inside their perimeter, held out all day long against vastly superior forces. In mid-morning Danjou fell dying, hit in the chest. Vilain lasted till mid-afternoon before being killed instantly by a bullet in the head. Each Mexican rush was harder to beat off; each left a little bit more of the perimeter commanded by the guns of a new enemy lodgement. At about noon the defenders were tormented by hope at the sound of a drum and marching feet — but it was reinforcement for the Juarists, three battalions totalling 1,200 infantry.

By late afternoon Maudet had just eleven men left on their feet and fighting, penned in the ruins of the sheds around the south-west corner of the yard. The rest of the house and yard were in the hands of the enemy, and were carpeted with dead and wounded. The fallen légionnaires, maddened by thirst, licked blood from their own wounds. The Mexicans fired what was left of the house, sending thick smoke rolling over the last handful of defenders, choking them and hiding the enemy's preparations for a final attack.

About ten kilometres to the east Capt Cabossel halted his bullion convoy escort, and listened to faint gunfire on the breeze: Indian scouts reported a fight at Camerone. With a precious charge, and only two companies of men, Cabossell had no choice — he returned to Le Soledad in safety.

By some time before 6 pm the French defenders of Camerone had been reduced to Sous-lt Maudet, Corporal Maine, and Légionnaires Catteau, Wenzel and Constantin. When one round apiece remained, Maudet gave the word for a last point-blank salvo at the enemy who swarmed only yards away. Then the five légionnaires fixed bayonets — and charged . . . It is this last act of incredible defiance which has engraved Camerone on the heart of the Legion, as its most sacred battle-honour.

Capitaine Jean Danjou, photographed in 1862; note grenade ornaments on collar (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

Catteau, throwing himself in front of Maudet, went down riddled with bullets; Maudet fell shot in the thigh and side. The other three stood over their officer, bayonets fixed, and defied some 50 Mexicans who surrounded them. Their example moved the nearest Mexican officer, Col Combas, who held his men back and called on them to surrender. Probably intoxicated by having completely accepted the idea of his own death, Maine replied that they would surrender if allowed to keep their weapons and if their officer could be cared for properly. Combas is said to have replied: 'Gentlemen, one can refuse nothing to men like you'.

When Jeanningros and the relief column arrived at Camerone early on 1 May, they were met by a blood-spattered, naked scarecrow stumbling out of the scrub. Drummer Lai of the 3rd Coy had seven lance and two bullet wounds; he was the only member of the company to escape death or capture. Among the stripped corpses jumbled around the ruins of Camerone Jeanningros found Danjou's wooden hand. He kept it and took it back to Algeria when the campaign was over. Today it is the most sacred relic in the Legion's *Salle d'honneur*, and is paraded in a velvet-lined casket each 30 April before the huge Memorial to the Dead at the headquarters of the 1^{er} RE, as the high point of the Legion's most revered ceremonial.

The full butcher's bill for Camerone was, from a starting strength of three officers and 62 NCOs and men: — two officers and 22 NCOs and men killed outright; one officer and eight NCOs and men died of wounds shortly after the battle; nineteen NCOs and men died in captivity of other causes; one man, evaded capture; and twelve NCOs and men, including Maine, survived to be exchanged later. It was calculated that they inflicted some 300 casualties on the Mexicans. The defence of Camerone was recognised as something unusual straight away: French troops passing the spot were ordered to present arms. Before leaving Mexico the Legion raised a small monument. A new one was erected with Mexican co-operation in 1892, and a third and most impressive one in 1965. The legend on the

1892 slab is worth quoting here, both in translation and in its original, and somehow most apt Latin:

> QUOS HIC NON PLUS LX
> ADVERSI TOTIUS AGMINIS
> MOLES CONSTRAVIT
> VITA PRIAM QUAM VIRTUS
> MILITES DESERUIT GALLICOS
> DIE XXX MENSI APR. ANNI MDCCCLXIII
>
> Here there were less than sixty
> Facing a whole army
> Whose weight crushed them under
> But their lives, before their courage,
> Left these French soldiers
> 30 April 1863

Puebla fell at last, and Juarez was forced to leave Mexico City. He took with him to his desert refuge in the north an almost naked but intact authority as President of the Republic, and on 10 June the French entered the capital. In October Gen Forey was sent home to enjoy his marshal's baton, and supreme command passed to Gen Bazaine, the clever, patient veteran who had taken his first wound on the salt-marsh of Macta as a subaltern of the Legion thirty years before. He mounted Algerian-style campaigns against the scattered Juarist forces with great success; but the task was hopeless in the long term. The savagery of the guerilla warfare mounted by the Juarists, and the sadistic repression inflicted on the population by the conservatives, kept the bitterness of the conflict alive and boiling. Maximilian would survive as emperor only as long as French bayonets surrounded his throne. Napoleon pressed him continually to build a genuine power-base from local forces, all too aware that unless he presented the world with a *fait accompli* soon the pressure to withdraw French forces would become serious. Time was on Juarez's side, and with Indian patience this Mexican Lincoln simply waited for the tide to turn.

One promise made by Napoleon to the less-than-enthusiastic Maximilian — who may have been light-minded and inclined to ignore harsh fact, but who was perfectly aware of the falsity of his position — was that the Foreign Legion, built up to six battalions, would remain to guard the throne for ten years. This news was not greeted with unmixed delight by the Legion, but at least it was followed by withdrawal at last from the pestilential *Terres Chaudes* to the healthier uplands of Puebla, in November 1863. The 3rd Bn was shipped to Mexico between January and April

Plate 1: Algeria 1832–35

(Figures read from left to right on each Plate, unless indicated)

1. Fusilier, 1st Coy, 1er Bn, grande tenue, 1832: *From the Benigni plate and Brunon's notes in* L d'O (1), *and general material in* Malibran. *Basically the Line infantry uniform of May 1822 regulations, the trousers of July 1829 regulations and the 1825 shako. All personnel wore moustaches, by an order of 1831. The* étui *or ticking roll on the knapsack, stiffened with wooden discs inside the ends, holds the rolled greatcoat in this order of dress. The differing equipment of flank companies is discussed in the text. Pockets are false: small personal items — tobacco, money, etc — were stowed under the shako.* **2. Capitaine, Grenadier Coy, grande tenue, 1832–34:** *From notes in* L d'O(1), Malibran, *and a photograph in* L d'O(2). *The red 'shaving brush' pompon identifies the company, as does the gold grenade turnback ornament. Rank distinctions are discussed in the text.* **3. Clairon, Fusilier Coy, 1832–35:** *From Benigni plate,* L d'O(1). *The coat has added tricolour musician's lace at collar and cuff, inside the line of crimson piping. The bugle has tricolour cords and tassels. The shako is replaced by a tapered cap of cloth over cardboard with a rounded leather neckflap folded upwards at the back, dark blue piping up the four sides and surrounding the top surface, and a blue button in the centre of the top surface, which has a radially pleated effect. Only voltigeur companies were supposed to have buglers rather than drummers, but in Algeria buglers seem to have been adopted by all companies as more practical in the terrain and climate.* **4. Fusilier, campaign dress, 1832–35:** *From Benigni plate,* L d'O(1). *The cap, probably the earlier type discussed in the text, was rather large and shapeless. The coat is shown much bluer in some editions of* L d'O, *but other sources show the* 'gris de fer' *of the 1830s as definitely grey, not grey-blue. Benigni shows crimson collar* écussons *not mentioned in regulations. The knapsack carries the crimson trousers, the ticking roll containing* habit *and/or* veste, *and a rolled* sac à campement *or sleeping bag: one man in two carried a tent roll. Litre-capacity tin canteens were common but not universal, and gourds were popular. On campaign the pouch flap was covered with white cloth, marked with the owner's number.*

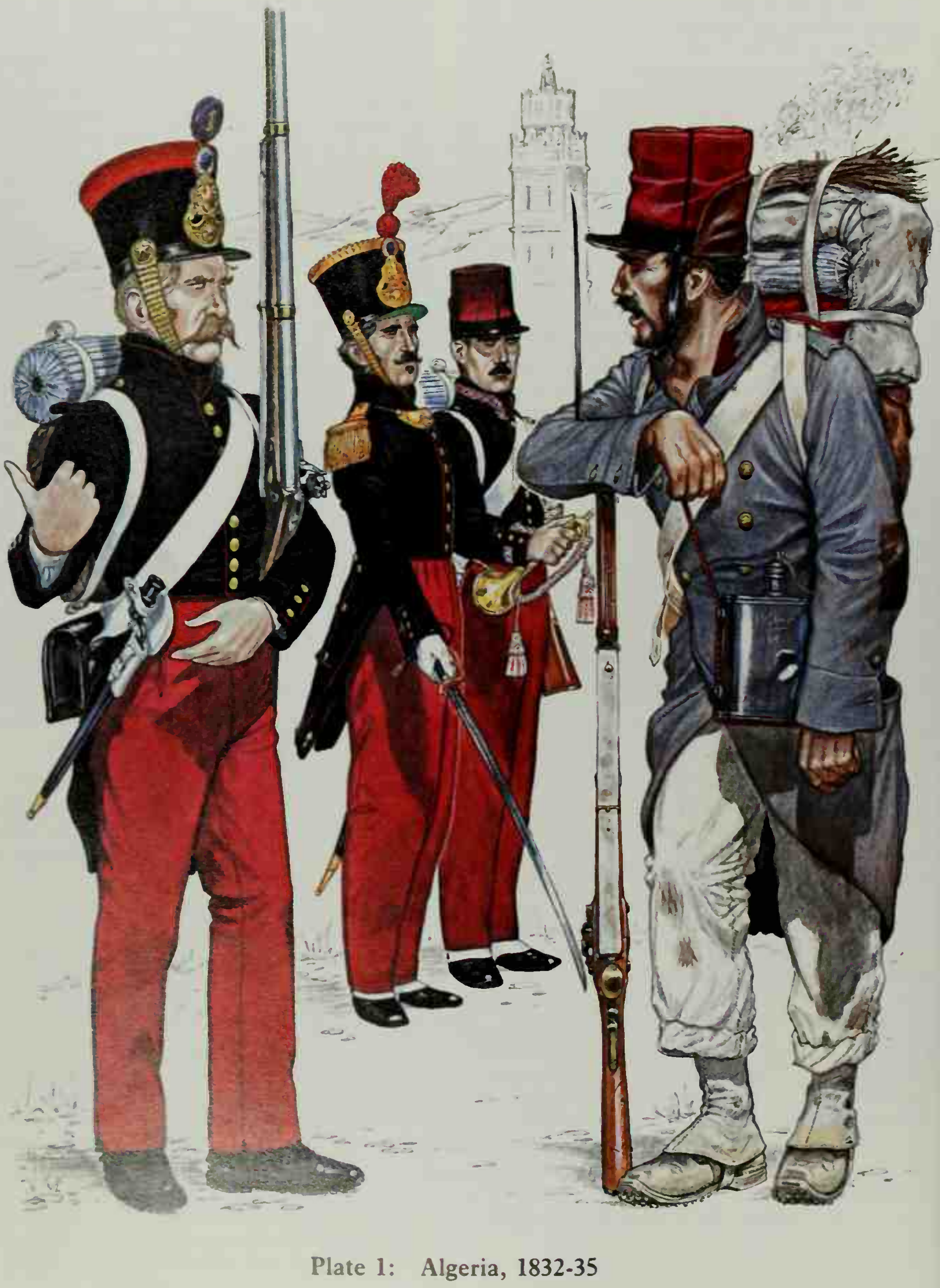


Plate 1: Algeria, 1832-35

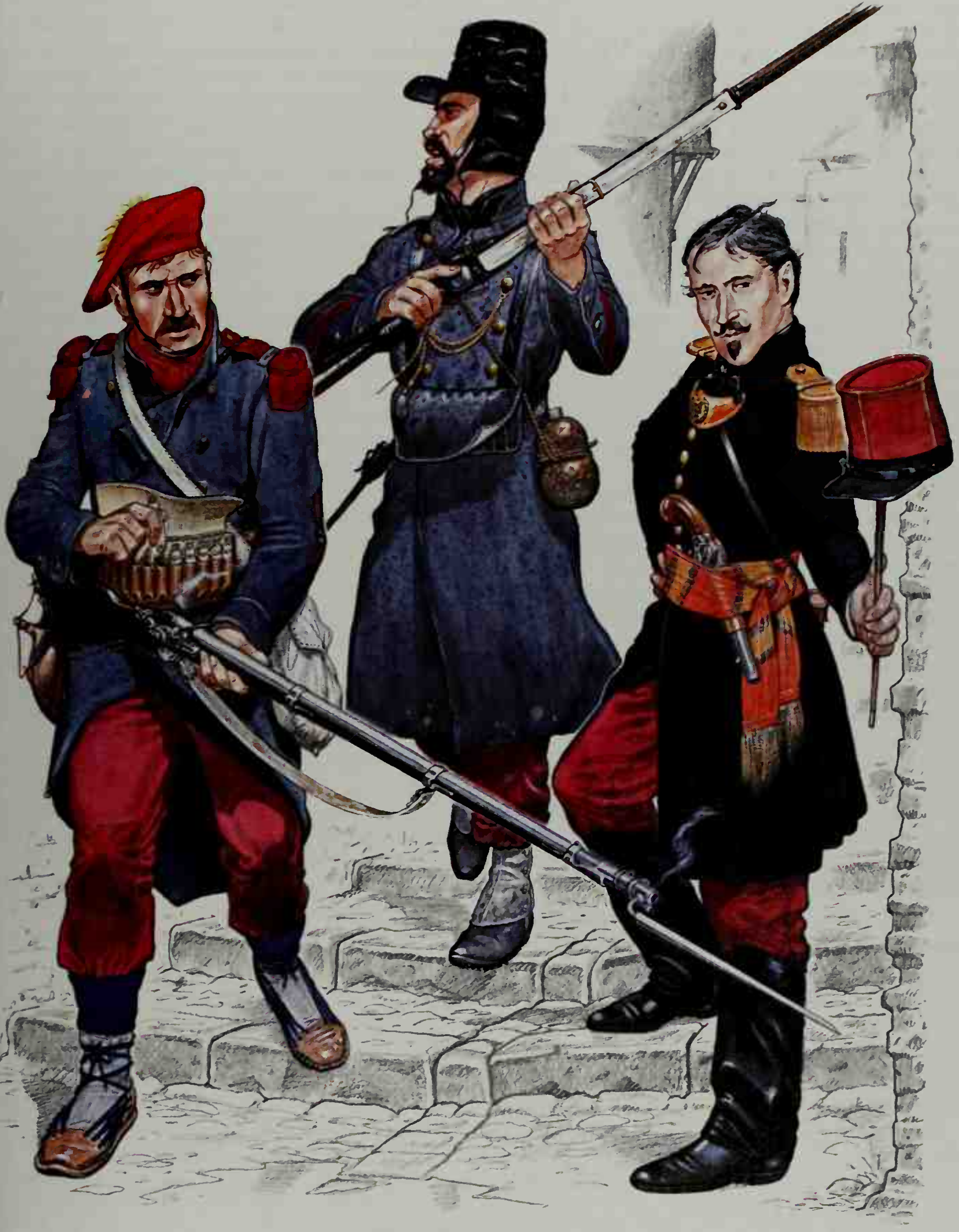


Plate 2: Campaign Dress, 1837

1864, and the depot company left Algeria for Aix-en-Provence. The formation of a 4th Bn in Mexico was authorised late in April 1864. In May an experiment started some seven months earlier was officially regularised; a *compagnie franche* which had been fighting the guerillas independently out in the countryside was designated 6th Coy, 1st Bn. Simultaneously a cavalry squadron was raised from légionnaires with suitable experience, and designated 6th Coy, 2nd Bn.

From its base at Puebla the Legion continued to pursue the thankless lot of a hated army of occupation, and even officers and men hardened by years of ungentle Algerian campaigning were shocked by the appalling excesses of 'loyalist' and 'rebel' Mexican forces — the labels being applied according to the side one supported. The conservative commanders, such as the disgustingly cruel Leonardo Marquez, were scarcely worse than the semi-bandits of Porfirio Diaz, while Col Dupin's '*Contre-Guerilla*' of international cut-throats was not far behind. The war became an increasingly sickening ordeal, rather than a romantic crusade. When Maximilian arrived in person in May 1864 large-scale troop movements were necessary to ensure his safe drive from the coast to Mexico City, and this corridor to the sea remained the only relatively safe French-controlled area throughout most of the war.

Two Legion battalions fought in Bazaine's successful southwards drive against Diaz in Oaxaca in the winter of 1864–65. A fifth battalion was raised by an Imperial decree of April 1865. In early summer the headquarters moved up to Mexico City, and three battalions advanced into the northern deserts to counter increasing Juarist activity. Jeanningros led two of them, in a mixed column along the old Algerian lines, on a successful sweep against enemy guerillas around Negrete, dispersing them at Yerba-Buena and then returning to Saltillo in June. The 3rd Bn was then based at Matamoros, and the bulk of the 1st at San Luis Potosi. The 2nd, the *compagnie franche* and the cavalry squadron were based at Monterrey at the end of June 1865. (In July the raising of a sixth battalion was authorised, but as it was formed at Blida, Algeria it did not come out until April 1866.)

The American Civil War ended, and President Johnson lost no time in restating the Monroe Doctrine loud and clear; no Old World armies were going to be tolerated in the Americas, and Phil Sheridan soon led a 50,000-man Army of Observation to the Rio Grande. Contact was made with Juarez, and Springfield rifles began to cross the border in impressive numbers, while Juarist officers dined at Fort Bliss. Napoleon regretfully insisted that French troops must be withdrawn in the near future. The savagery of the war between Mexican and Mexican reached a positively Mongol level; Maximilian's 'Black Decree' gave his more ruthless local lieutenants an excuse to murder out of hand, and head-hunting—literally—became a popular sport on both sides.

In February 1866 Cdt Brian, based at Parras with the 3rd, 4th, 5th and Voltigeur companies of the 2nd Bn of the Legion, learned that a large Juarist force was installed in the hills around the *haçienda* of Santa Isabel some nine miles away. Despite orders to stay on the defensive, he marched out at midnight on 28 February with seven other officers and 177 men, leaving only Lt Bastidon and the 5th Coy — mainly invalids — to hold Parras. At dawn Brian attacked Santa Isabel; the force was surrounded by 1,500 enemy on

Plate 2: Campaign Dress, 1837

5. **Grenadier, Spain:** *From Benigni plate,* L d'O(2); *note blue collar* écussons, *not mentioned in regulations quoted by Morel. Local additions to the uniform and kit are the Carlist bonnet with a thick tuft of yellow wool at the top centre, wineskin and haversack, espadrilles, and traditional Mediterranean belly-pouch on a waist-belt.* 6. **Caporal, Algeria:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1), *and general contemporary material. The légionnaire of the Constantine expedition; his 1833 cap has a black oilskin cover, its lace-up neck-flap worn down here. Again, note blue* écussons. *Red wool braid ranking is worn on both forearms. The 'Bedeau' type of belly-pouch, made from coat-cloth, is discussed in the text.* 7. **Lieutenant, Algeria:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1). *The plain midnight blue frock coat is the single-breasted* capote-tunique, *with pleated skirts — a non-regulation but popular garment modelled on Chasseur d'Afrique styles. The gorget was soon to disappear from field uniform. Note full-cut cavalry-style trousers with false booting. The cap has simple gold pipings, without specific rank lace. The 1821 sword began to be replaced on campaign by a cane, later* de rigeur *for Legion officers. Pistols were carried to personal taste; this subaltern has an 1822 cavalry pistol thrust into an Arab shawl worn as a sash.*

higher ground, and was massacred. At least seven officers and 93 men died in the battle; one escaped with the news, and made his way to French positions eventually; and of the 80-odd prisoners, it is not thought that any survived. The Juarists then attacked Parras, but were held off by Bastidon's 80 invalids until Cdt Saussier's 1st Bn managed to relieve them. This was the last major clash of the Mexican campaign.

The last nail in Maximilian's coffin was struck by the news, in July 1866, of the destruction of the Austrian Army at Sadowa by a Prussian Army equipped with bolt-action rifles and fine new Krupp artillery. With a growing shadow to the east, Napoleon could delay no longer. The French troops in Mexico would contract their perimeter, drawing back towards the capital and then the Gulf coast, defending themselves but taking no further part in offensive operations. Bazaine carried out this difficult manoeuvre with his usual skill; Juarez came south, and Diaz came north, but neither attempted to interfere with a withdrawal wholly to their advantage. In October the order went out to turn Napoleon's promise into reality; the Legion was built up into an all-arms force, to be left behind to plug the gaps in Maximilian's despicable local army for as long as possible. For this unenviable task the six infantry battalions were concentrated at Queretaro in November, with two locally-raised *cazador* battalions. The mounted element was doubled, a second squadron being formed from légionnaires with cavalry experience. Two artillery companies, an engineer company and a supply company were formed in the same way, drawn from the Legion's bottomless pool of world-wide military experience. Mercifully, the order was rescinded on 16 December 1866. On 5 February 1867 the last 'red trousers' marched out of Mexico City; on 27 February the last companies of the Legion sailed from Vera Cruz for Africa; and some three months later Maximilian, having ignored all appeals to flee, died against a wall at Queretaro. He joined the 31 officers and 1,917 NCOs and men of the Legion who had died to win and keep his throne.

The Legion, reduced to three eight-company battalions once more, went into garrison in spring 1867 at Sidi-bel-Abbès, Mascara and Saïda. In 1868 a fourth battalion was raised; and there was some fighting around Figuig. The following year légionnaires took part in operations against the tribesmen of the Ouled Sidi Cheikh in the south-west of Oran Province, and in early 1870 there was more fighting around Guir. Otherwise the Legion occupied itself with the usual back-breaking work of road-building. It does not seem to have been a happy period, and morale was low.

When the Franco-Prussian War broke out in July 1870 many foreigners in France volunteered to fight the Prussians, and a 5th Bn — intended to be the first of several — was authorised on 22 August, and raised at Tours. (In fact a whole new '2^{e} RE' of five eight-company battalions was authorised in September, but never came into being.) By the end of September, when it was decided to transfer two battalions of the Legion from Algeria to France, the disaster of Sedan had brought the Emperor down. The 1st and 2nd Bns arrived at Toulon on 11 October, by which time the 5th Bn had already fought well at Bel-Air-les-Aides and had been roughly handled at Bannier. The three battalions were brought together at Pierrefitte on 19 October, and thereafter served together in the 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, 15th Corps of the Army of the Loire.

Plate 3: Campaign Dress, 1840s–50s

8. Voltigeur, 1840s: *From Benigni,* L d'O(1); *a soldier of Bugeaud's light columns. The* casquette *has a varnished white leather top; the neck-flap was attached or merely tucked in. The round-bottomed* veste *was everyday uniform, worn here with flank company epaulettes. The horseshoe roll is the* sac à campement, *containing extra ammunition and rations. Note substantial leather belly-pouch, supported by belt and neck-strap, and service chevron on left arm.* **9. Grenadier, winter campaign dress,** circa **1842:** *From a Benigni plate,* L d'O; *note blue collar* écussons, *and red cravat. We have substituted the green-painted wooden* tonelette *canteen for Benigni's gourd. The home-made cloth-faced belly-pouch has 'fantasy' grenadier decorations; it is supported by a neck-strap and a belt. Walking sticks were commonly used* en colonne. *The leather cap top has been superceded by cloth once more.* **10. Grenadier, summer marching order, mid-1850s:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1); *we have given him a plainer and probably more typical belly-pouch. Note the 1850* bonnet de police à visière, *grenade decorations on red* écussons, *1845 belt equipment, and percussion musket. The belly-pouch is still worn along with the regulation rear pouch. The* barda *— pack — includes an individual tent (these were first made by cutting open the* sac à campement) *and an issue pole. The ten-litre squad* 'bouthéon' *was peculiar to African-based troops at this time.*

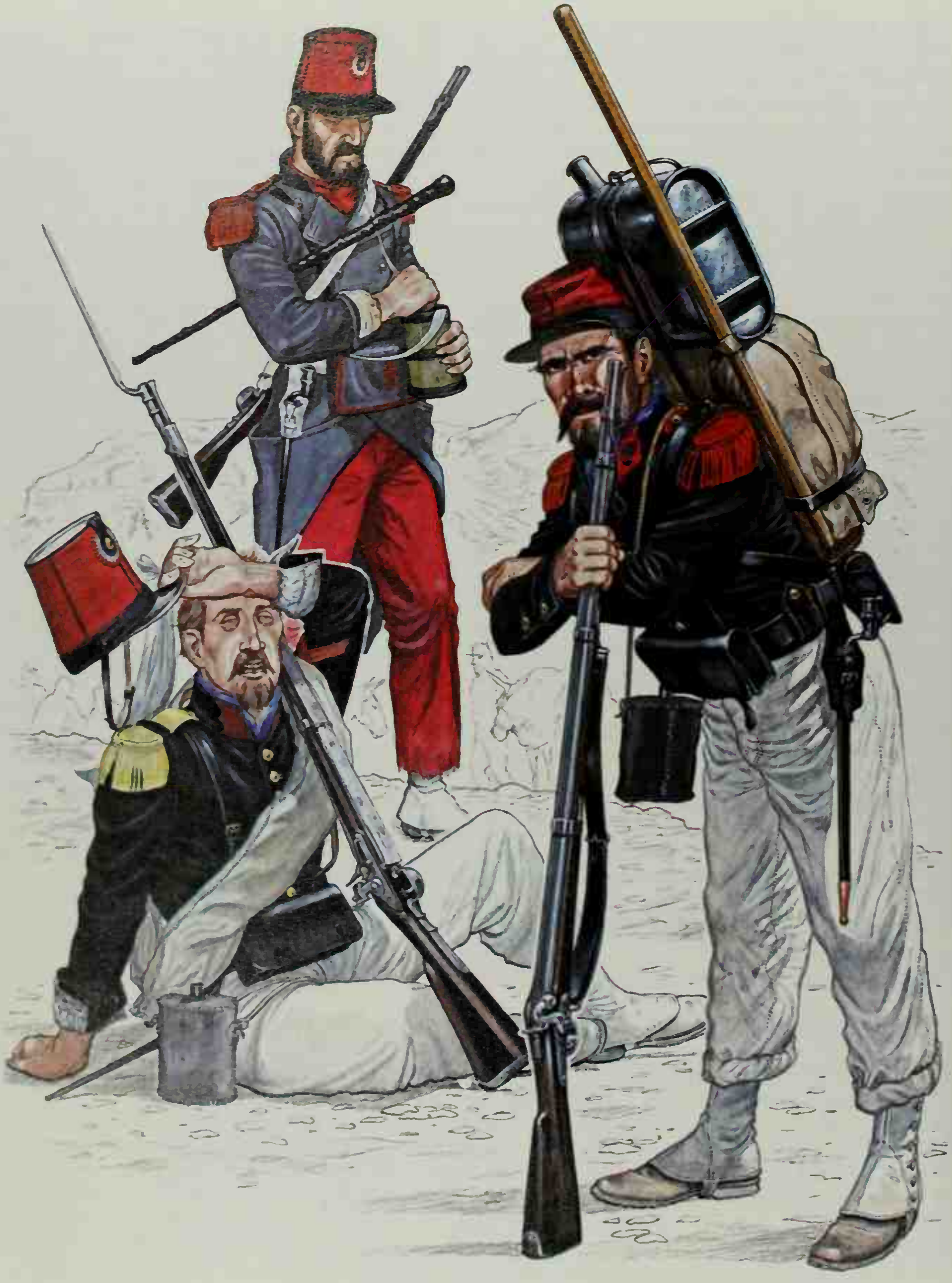


Plate 3: Campaign Dress, 1840s-50s

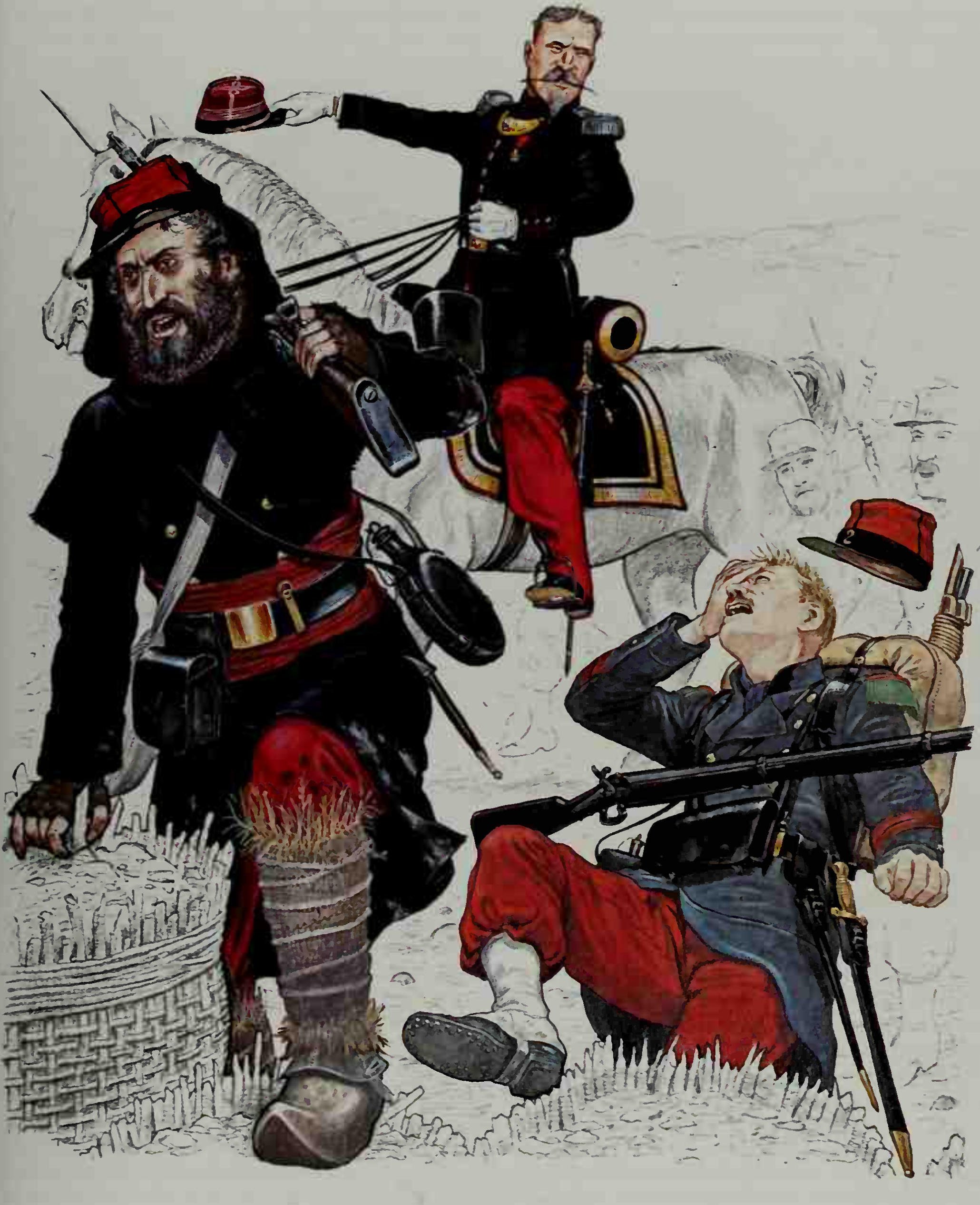
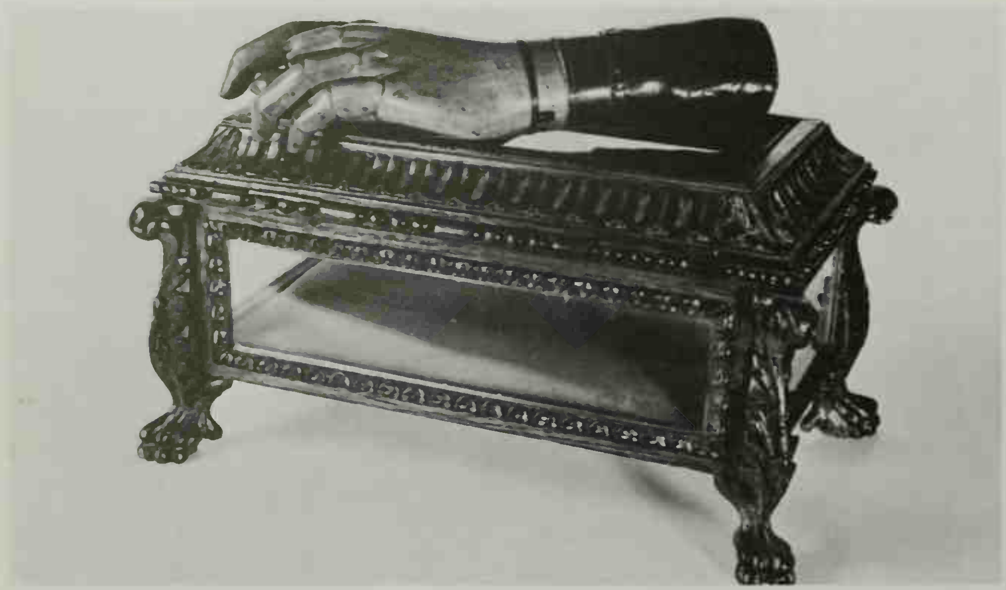


Plate 4: Crimea and Italy, 1854-59

This use of légionnaires on the soil of France was directly counter to the original law of 9 March 1831, and reflected the desperate plight of French arms.

After fighting the Prussian rearguard at Orleans on 11 November, the légionnaires marched north. They had a hard fight at Cercottes on 3 December, then covered the retreat of their division. By the time they halted in the snow around Bourges on the 11th they had been reduced to battalion strength.



Danjou's wooden hand, displayed on the casket in which it is kept today in the Legion's Room of Honour. (*Képi Blanc*)

Plate 4: Crimea and Italy, 1854–59

11. Légionnaire, Crimea, winter 1854–55: *From Benigni,* L d'O(1), *a uniform in the Musée de l'Emperi, and general material in* G d'U no 37. *Note 'duck's bill' peak of 1852* képi, *worn without insignia by the Legion. (The term* képi *was not official until 1874 but is used here for brevity.) Some 60,000 examples of the* criméene *coat were issued in midnight blue, grey-blue, and British dark grey coat cloth. It differed from the* capote *in having a hood and cape, and horizontal flapped pockets in the skirts. The 1845 belt and* giberne *are worn. The leather canteen appeared early in the 1850s; the haversack was unofficial, but widely tolerated on campaign, as was the sash of red or blue, worn over the coat.* **12. Lieutenant-colonel, 2^e RE, Italy, 1859:** *From regulations, portraits, and the Benigni plate of the death of Col de Chabrière, although we have demoted our field officer by one rank. The 1858* képi, *of reduced proportions, has a gold chinstrap, and for this rank triple lace at four points vertically, and a triple quatrefoil knot on the top. For this rank the lace above the band is gold/silver/gold/silver/gold; and the epaulettes are silver. The frock is the 1845 officer's tunic, with the black everyday service belt and two sword suspenders. The horse furniture has field officer's gold and crimson decoration and plain black holster covers.* **13. Caporal of fusiliers, 2^e RE, Italy, 1859:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(3), *and* G d'U no 37. *The uniform of the 'old' non-Swiss regiment after the 1856 regulations; the 1858* képi *has a brass regimental number. The 1852 regulations introduced the green epaulettes with red crescents. Corporal's rank is marked by forearm stripes in red and the 1831* glaive *sabre. The leather equipment is 1845 pattern, with additional belly-pouch; note that the tent-pole is now halved. The old square tin canteen with a central spout was still observed. White summer campaign trousers were worn at Magenta; we show the crimson cold-weather type.*

Drafts of inexperienced young Breton recruits were soon added, bringing the regiment up to a nominal strength of between 2,000 and 3,000, but diluting its fighting quality. Included in the new Army of the North, it fought in the woods of Sainte-Suzanne and at Béthoncourt and Montchevis, in freezing January weather. There were significant desertions among the raw recruits during the retreat to Besançon which followed. After the armistice of 28 January many 'duration only' men were released. No accurate casualty figures were compiled, but it seems that the regiment had lost about 950 of all ranks. It was down to about 1,000 when, late in March, there came an order to march to Paris. The agony of France was not yet over, and insurrection broke out in the Paris Commune.

The Legion fought throughout May at Clichy, Levallois, and Saint-Ouen. They occupied the Gare du Nord and the quays of La Villette, and fought their way through the barricades of the Rue de Flandre, the park of Buttes-Chaumont, the Rue de Puebla, and the Place des Fêtes, before occupying the barracks of La Pépinière.

On 11 June they left the capital, and embarked at Toulon on the 13th. By the 22nd they were back at Mascara. In July 1871 a ministerial order confirmed the strength of the Régiment Etranger at five eight-company battalions.

Uniforms 1860-72

The uniforms in which the Legion arrived in Mexico were no less bizarre than the Imperial dreams which sent them there. Napoleon III had decided that his infantry should reflect a more ebullient and devil-may-care image, in keeping with the ambitious self-importance of his new Imperial dawn. Consequently, in regulations of 30 March 1860, his *fantassins* were doomed to be tricked out in an entirely new and impractical wardrobe.

The shako of 1860 was, quite possibly, never issued to the Legion; it certainly had not arrived in Algeria before 1862, and may have been limited in Mexico to formal parades by small elements of troops. In case it was worn, however, it merits description. It was of the same shape as before, a forward-slanting, tapered, truncated cone with a small squared peak. It was now entirely of black leather, including the chinstrap. The cockade at the top of the front was partly covered by the head of the brass Imperial eagle plate, which had the number and name of the regiment on a 'bomb' low

Plate 5: The Swiss, 1855—59

14. Sapeur, 1er RE, 1856–59: *In all these figures we follow Benigni and Brunon,* L d'O(1), *who themselves follow Cdt Brecht and Adj Escher, veterans of the Swiss regiment. We may presume red collar grenades. Note traditional Swiss pioneer axe, and, almost invisible here, 1831 sabre and socket bayonet. Note* Médaille Militaire, *introduced as supreme gallantry decoration in 1852.* **15. Grenadier, 1er RE,** circa **May 1856:** *From regulations, and tunics and shako in Basle Museum and Brunon Collection. The 1852 shako has 1856 chinscales; the double-sphere pompon indicates the company. Interestingly, the Brunon Collection example has red piping and top band instead of regulation yellow. Flank company enlisted men still carried the 1831 sabre.* **16. Tambour, 1er RE, 1859:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1), *and general material in* Malibran. *There seems to be no real significance in varying coat shades; Escher shows what might be described as 'Light Royal Air Force Blue'. The individual mess-tin dated from 1852. The* capote *collar is the subject of some controversy. Most sources list green* écussons *on a plain grey-blue collar; Morel quotes regulations of February 1855 as giving an undecorated stand-and-fall 'Saxe' collar, and those of April 1856 as listing green patches on a grey-blue stand collar. Brunon agrees with the latter version.* Sabretasche, *and Escher's painting, indicate a green stand collar with red* écussons. **17. Sergent, Bn de Tirailleurs, 2e Légion Etrangère, 1855:** *From Brecht original published in* L d'O(3), *and Benigni's derivative plate in* L d'O(1). *Both show brass buttons instead of the regulation silver. Brecht shows a brass cap badge, identified by Milassin as a bugle-horn. The yellow-piped grey-blue trousers are those of the Chasseur battalions. The weapon is their special 1840 carbine, with sabre bayonet.*

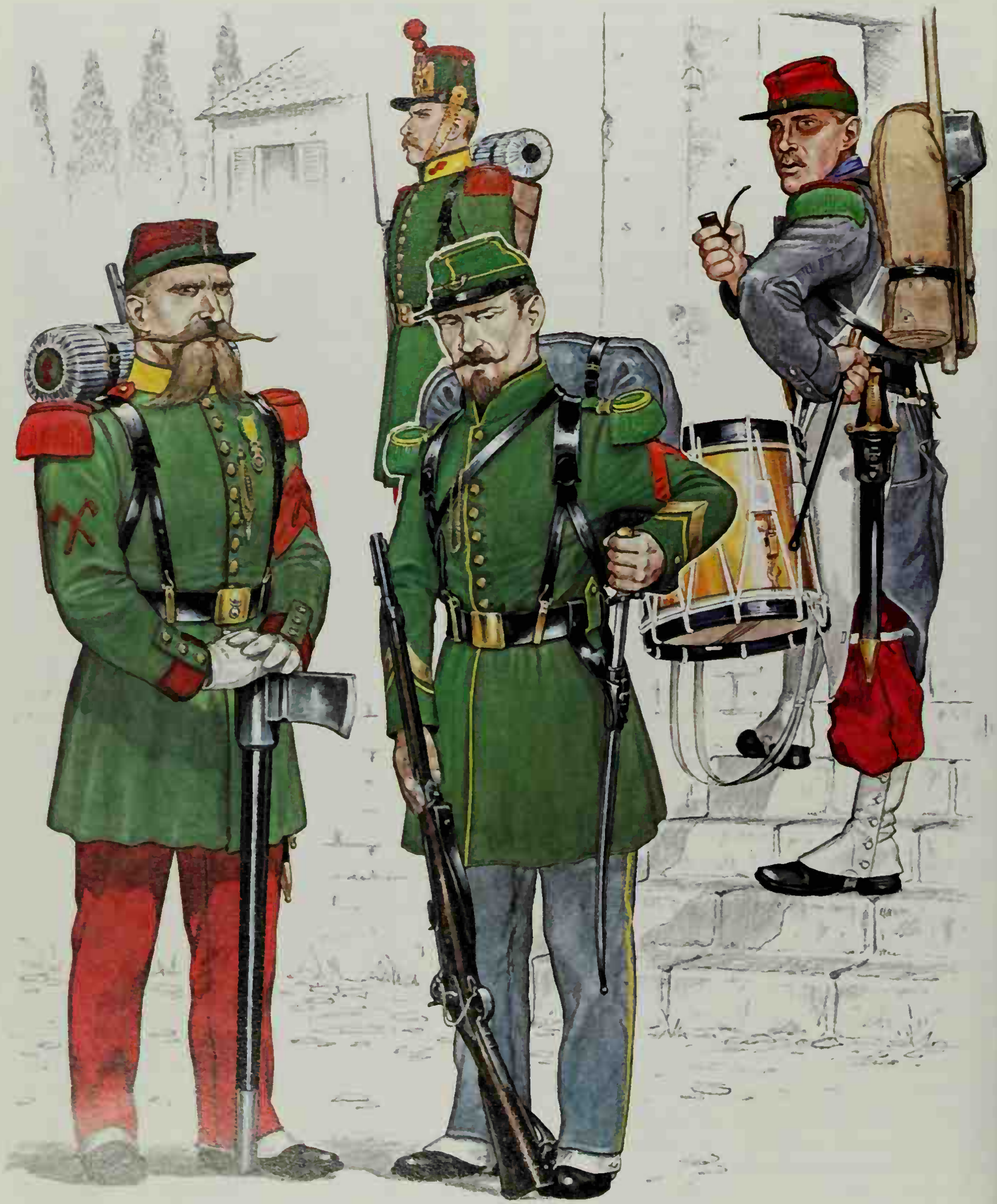


Plate 5: The Swiss, 1855-59

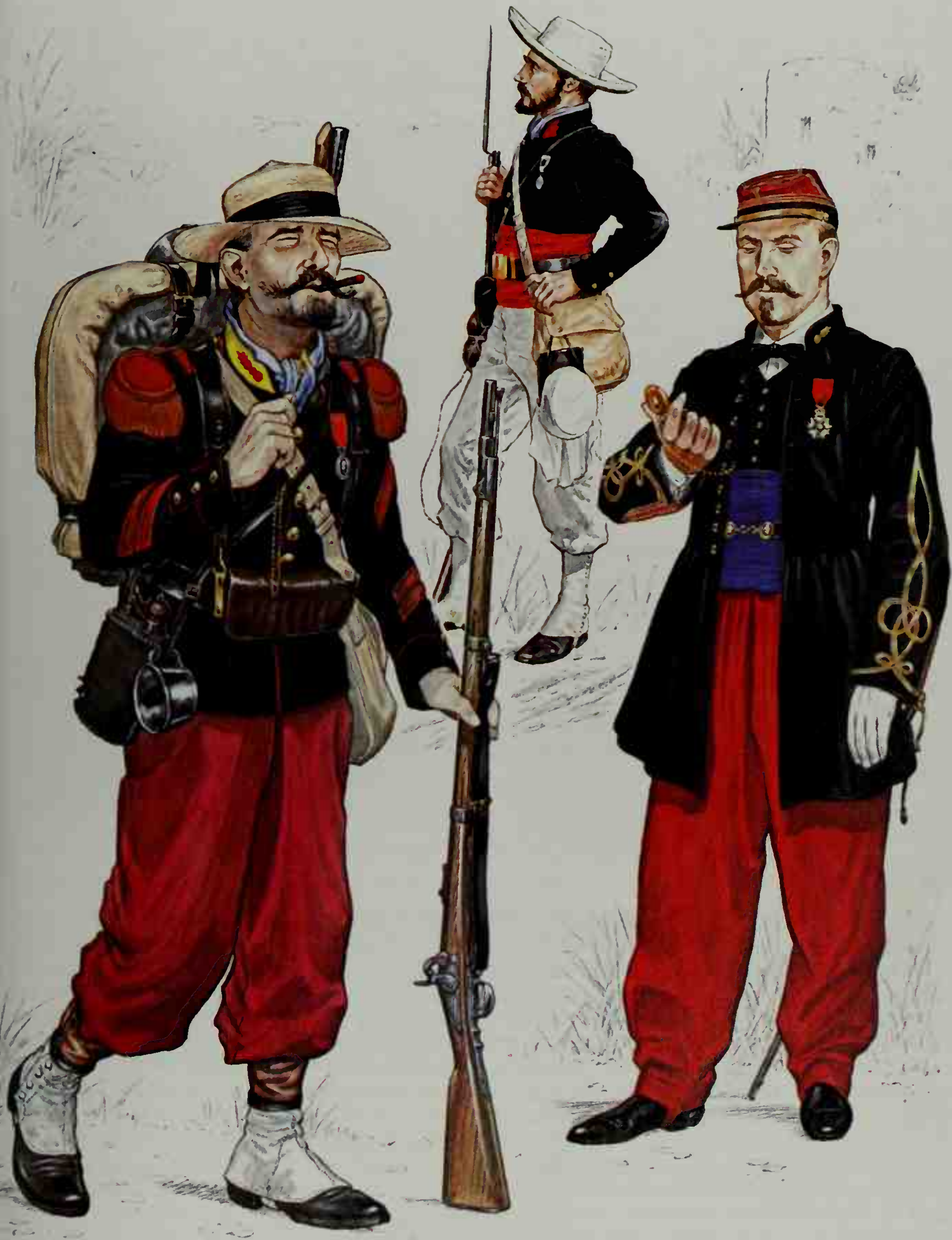
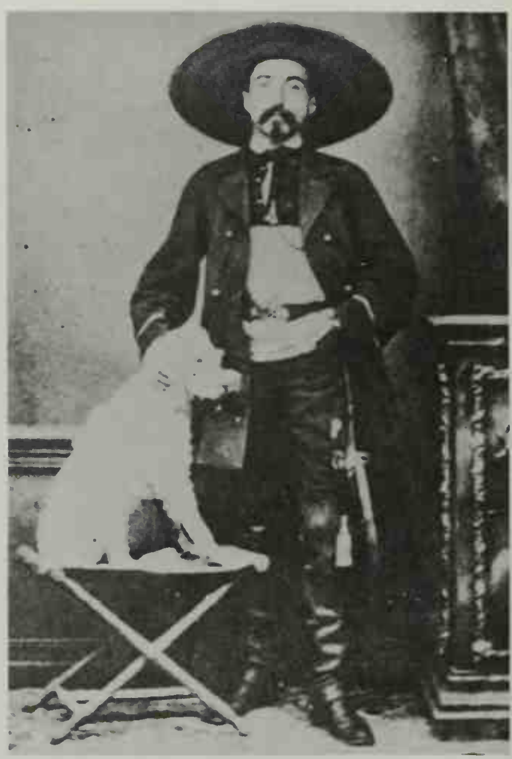


Plate 6: Mexico, 1863-65

and central. For *grande tenue* regulations specified an *aigrette,* a tall, stiff hair tuft rising from a brass 'tulip', at front centre. This was red, yellow, green, white and blue for grenadiers, voltigeurs, fusiliers, staff and HQ company respectively. Elipse-shaped pompons replaced this for *petite tenue,* in battalion colours with brass company numbers for fusiliers, while flank companies wore double spherical pompons in red and yellow. As it was leather, the shako would not need an oilcloth cover for dirty weather; a white cotton cover was to be worn against the summer sun, complete with a neck-flap.

Algerian-based units were permitted to keep the *képi,* but the 1860 regulations officially supressed it for all troops. In theory, the shako was to be worn on campaign. In fact, most troops in Mexico stuck to the *képi* at most times, and in summer covered it with a white 'havelock', the designs of which varied, including one type which covered the peak as well. Often the neck-flap seems to have been tucked up out of sight under the rear of the havelock.*

(The 1860 regulations introduced instead of the *képi* a *bonnet à soufflet,* a 'sidecap' with a ridged crimson crown, deeply curved dark blue turn-ups, and — in the Line — yellow piping, front tassel and company emblems. The Legion did not use the new yellow branch colour of the Line, and it is uncertain whether they ever received the *bonnet* at all. Might one speculate that, if they did, it was piped dark blue instead?)



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*Benigni's painting of the battle of Ischeriden, 24 July 1857, shows *légionnaires* wearing white *képi*-covers without flaps. The photograph of a *légionnaire* in Mexico, reproduced here, is associated in the *Livre d'Or* with Brunon's first mention of this item; but there is, of course, nothing unlikely about its use in Algeria at any time after the introduction of the *képi* in 1850.

Plate 6: Mexico, 1863–65

18. Caporal, Grenadier Coy, Vera Cruz, 1863: *From Benigni and Brunon,* L d'O(1); *also from items in the Legion Museum, the Musée Royale de l'Armée in Brussels, and the Musée de l'Empéri. The hat is a French navy straw. The March 1860* basquine *tunic has grenadier collar decorations, forearm ranking, and a single re-enlistment chevron on the left arm. The two-spout* bidon *dates from about 1859. The belly-pouch was worn by many troops other than the Legion in Mexico, according to the sketches of Gen Vanson. Milassin states that in the Legion the* basquine *often had red collar piping; the examples in the three museums quoted all have blue, but given the Legion's independent habits there is nothing unlikely in the claim. Note Italy Medal and 1857 percussion musket.* **19. Fusilier, 1865–66:** *Composite, from notes and illustrations in* L d'O(1), *and items in the Legion Museum. The sombrero has a cloth cover: the* képi *is hung from the* musette. *Red and blue sashes were worn indiscriminately. The gourd and rope musket-sling are typical expendients. The 1845 pouch is worn at the right front of the belt.* **20. Capitaine, 1863:** *Based on a photograph and a posthumous portrait of Capt Jean Danjou, although we cannot be certain what uniform he wore at Camerone. We show typical officer's field dress of the Second Empire, taken from numerous photographs published in* L d'O(1). *The collar grenade appears in the photograph of Danjou, and Benigni shows it in his 'Le Serment'. The 3rd was a fusilier company, but Danjou was a temporary commander attached from the staff. The false hand is shown, white-gloved, in the portrait. Benigni shows the 1837 Chasseur sword.*

The 1860 regulations at least killed off the black stock, officially recognising the sky-blue calico cravat at last. It was knotted in the collar of a tunic now generally known as the *basquine*. This was dark blue, single-breasted, crotch-length; and had a yellow standing collar piped blue and bearing, where appropriate, red flank company emblems. In the Legion the rest of the piping was crimson; it followed the front and bottom edges, including two V-notches in the sides, and traced a *Soubise* pattern on the back, incorporating crimson company emblems. It also edged the cuffs, three-quarters of the cuff-patches, the belt loop on the left side, and the epaulette *brides*. The usual epaulettes were worn. In the Line, corporal's stripes and the edging of sergeant's stripes changed to yellow, but in the Legion red seems to have been retained.

Each man was issued with a second tunic following the regulation of 3 November 1860, which suppressed the *veste*; in theory, the second best tunic had no crimson piping on the *brides*. In practice, the briefest experience of the stifling and disease-ridden Mexican coastal lowlands led to the immediate re-adoption of the *veste* as everyday wear for all except sergeants. It is remembered in many of the memoirs of surviving veterans of the campaign, carefully examined by Brunon. Flannel sashes, of blue or, usually, red, were often worn.

Left: *Sous-lieutenant* Farjat of the 3rd Company, photographed in Mexico in 1864, wearing a costume typical of the licence enjoyed by officers of the period. Note sombrero, high boots, very broad sash worn over waistcoat, and interesting jacket in the *paletot* style, with open lapels and ranking in the form of gold braid rings round the cuffs (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

The 1860 regulations reached their nadir of folly below the waist. Huge crimson *pantalon à le chasseur* were issued, modelled on those of the Chasseurs of Napoleon III's Guard; they reached to mid-calf, where they fastened to light brown leather leggings. These awkward and pointless items, which were edged with dark leather and laced up the side, overlapped at the top of the ankle the 1855 white cloth half-gaiters.

The *capote* of the 1860 regulations was of *gris de fer bleuté*, had four pairs of buttons only very slightly tapered in their spacing, and reverted to a falling collar. There were no *brides*, as epaulettes were not supposed to be worn with it. This *capote* was in fact more of an innovation than it appeared. For the first time since the 1830s, it was intended that the greatcoat should be worn over the tunic in cold weather only. Previously, and indeed once again from 1867 onwards, the greatcoat worn over the shirt or *veste* had been the prescribed campaign dress of the French infantryman in all seasons. (Obviously this tradition applied with less force to troops, such as the Legion, who were based in Algeria, and who sometimes wore the *veste* alone; but it applied to the Legion during its forays into Europe.)

On disembarking, the Legion were issued with the light straw sennet or panama hat of the French navy; some seem to have had white cloth covers, and one veteran mentions ribbons in battalion colours. These lightly constructed hats soon disintegrated in service. From then on the normal headgear was the native sombrero, strongly woven

Plate 7: Mounted Squadrons, Mexico 1865–66

21. Fourrier, 1865–66: *From the interesting painting by von Prost in* L d'O(2) *and reproduced in this chapter; details are unclear because of deterioration, but the tunic is certainly the 1860* basquine *with added black 'brandenbourgs'. A midnight blue trouser sidestripe was added at the same time, but the painting does not show this clearly. The* képi *band bears a crimson double Hungarian knot. The painting also shows grenadier collar decorations and, apparently, red collar piping and solid red cuff-patches. Ranking is in the form of gold lace diagonals, backed red, on each forearm and upper arm. This NCO is clearly something of a dandy, and presumes to wear an officer's sword-belt.* **22. Légionnaire, 1865–66:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1). *The* képi, *from a surviving example in the Milassin collection, is unpiped, and perhaps locally made. We have substituted a carbine for the normal armament, a slung infantry rifle-musket; as voltigeurs of infantry battalions were receiving the carbine at the end of 1864 it seems possible that some troopers may have acquired it. We follow* Sabretasche *in showing the Chasseurs d'Afrique pouch belt, with brass grenade decoration, worn blackened by the Legion cavalry.* **23. Sous-lieutenant, 1866:** *From a photograph of Sous-lt Ténot in* L d'O(2); *details of pelisse frogging are hard to make out, but we follow* Sabretasche *in general arrangement. Note very full-cut trousers, and gold double Hungarian knot on the* képi *band. The* Médaille *and Mexican and Italian campaign decorations are worn by this officer, obviously a commissioned ranker.*

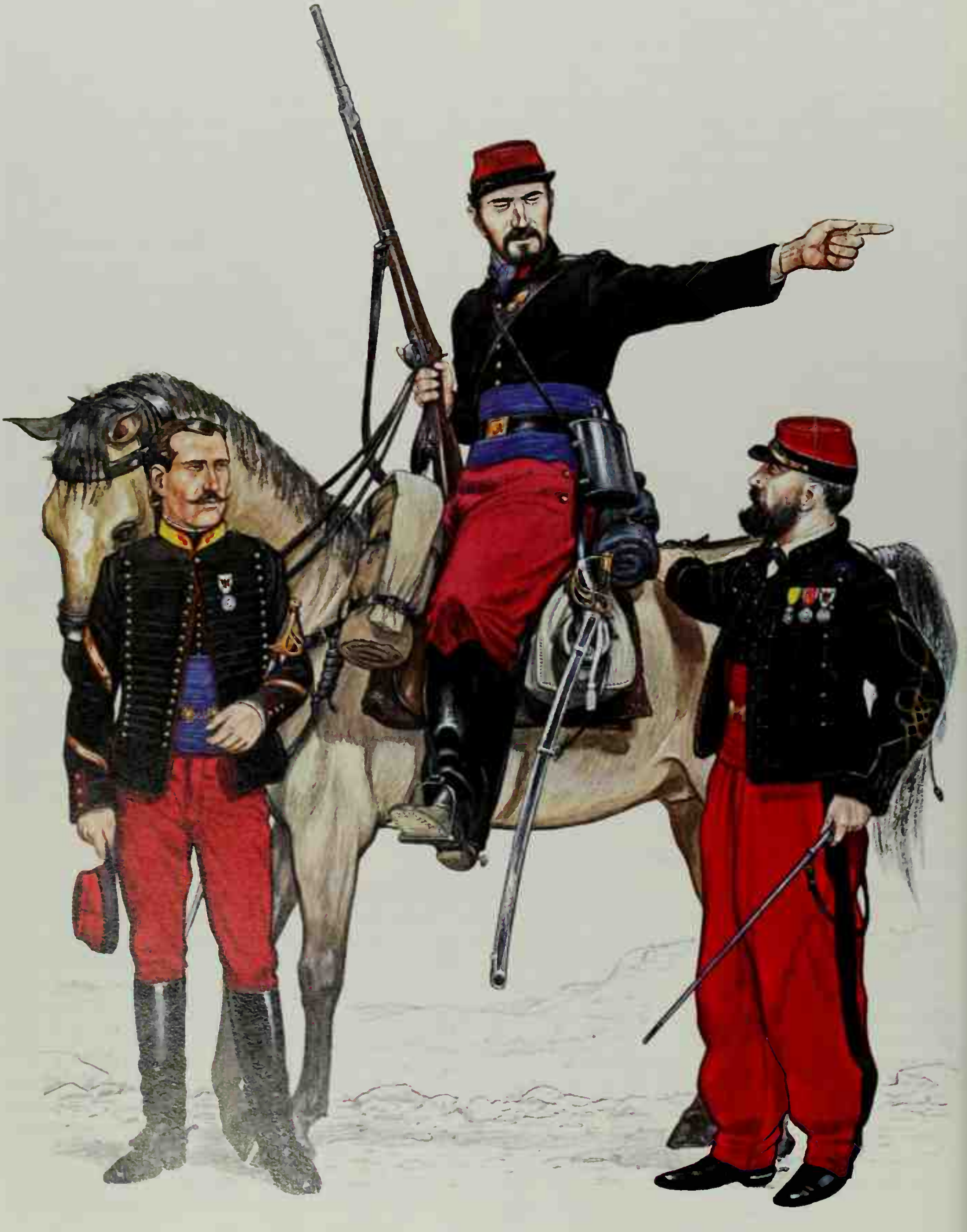


Plate 7: Mounted Squadrons, Mexico, 1865-66

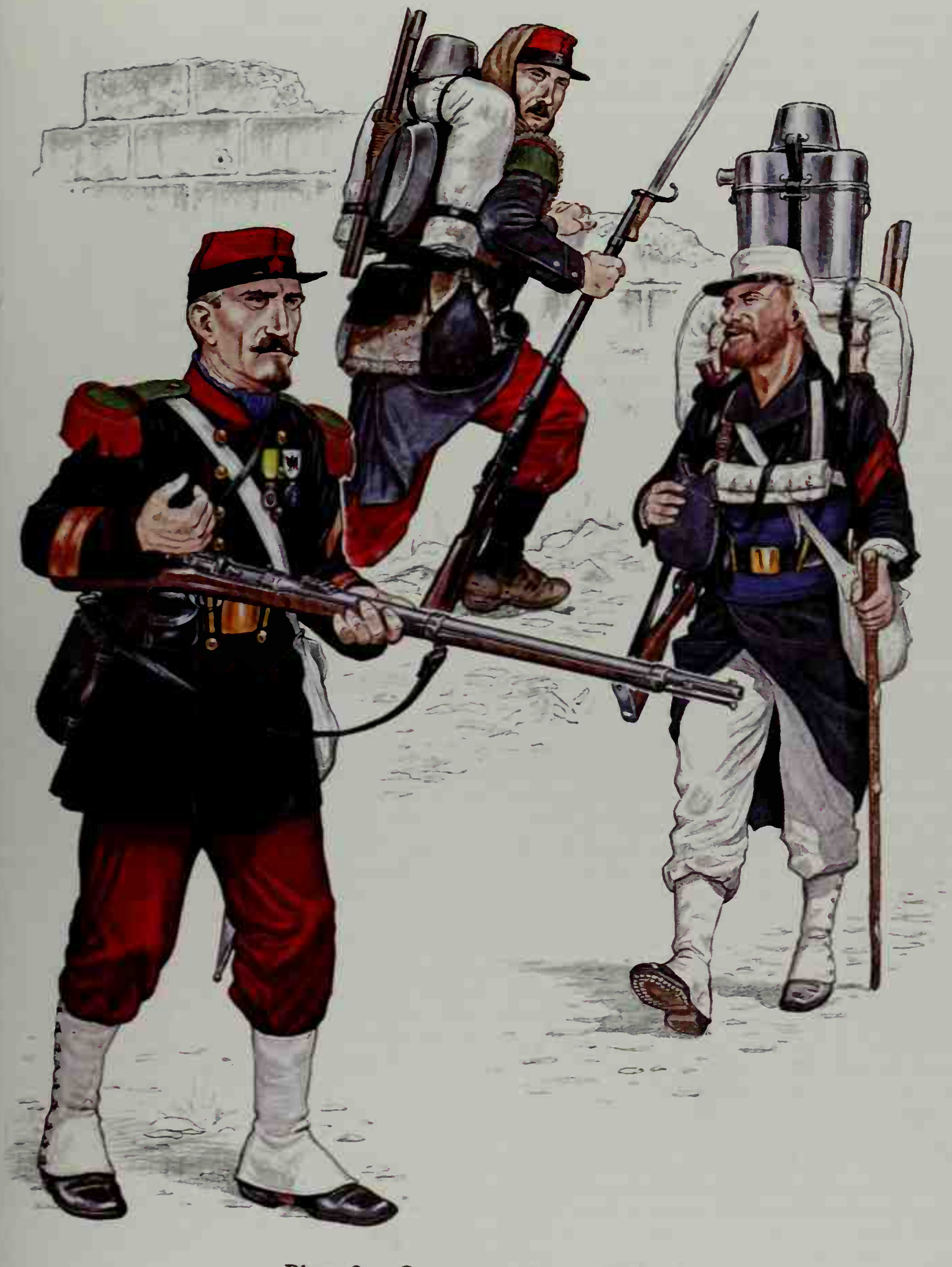


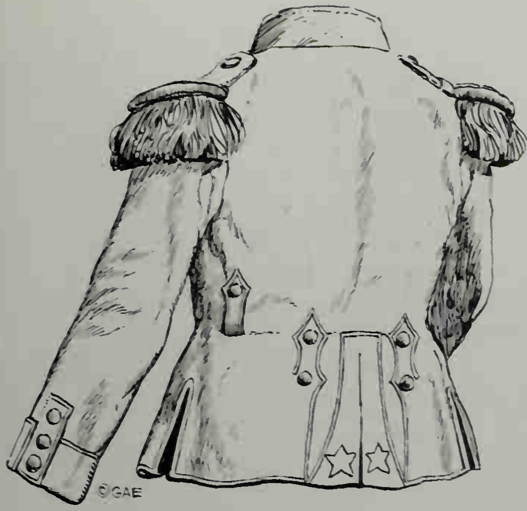
Plate 8: Campaign Dress, 1870-82

of straw or fibre; this was worn on the march, and the covered *képi* was carried handy and was substituted when action threatened, or at any other convenient time. Cloth covers for the sombrero were not unknown.

As mentioned above, the tunic was generally replaced for all except parade occasions with the *veste* and sash. The fatuous trousers, and infamous *jambières*, were also laid aside fairly quickly on campaign. A regulation of 24 May 1860 forbade the use of white fatigue trousers in the Army as a whole, but the Legion let this bother them no more than did the Line; in Mexico the white trousers worn in Algeria for summer campaigning since the 1830s soon reappeared, usually tucked into the white half-gaiters. Packs were often carried on mules, and the normal fighting uniform was as depicted by Benigni in his painting of Camerone, '*Le Serment*': the white-covered *képi,* with or without visible neck-flap; the *veste,* with red *écussions,* normally without epaulettes; for NCOs, the tunic (also depicted by Benigni without epaulettes); white trousers tucked into white or improvised gaiters; a red or blue sash; light combat equipment — *bidon, musette,* rifle and bayonet; and frequently the belly-pouch, still home-made out of leather or cloth.

Plate 8: Campaign Dress, 1870–82

24. Sergent-major, France 1870–71: *A composite; we have applied Legion uniform regulations to the surviving uniform and equipment of Sgt Maj de Biéville of the* 28^{e} de Ligne, *now in the reserve collection of the Musée de l'Armée (see* G d'U no 43). *By an order of July 1870 this rank wore the tunic on campaign, while all junior ranks wore the* veste *and/or* capote. *From 1867 the Legion* képi, *still with a squared peak, bore a star. Crimson facings and piping replace the yellow worn by the Line. January 1868 saw the first use of the Legion's distinctive green and red epaulettes by all companies. The issue of the Chassepot rifle rendered the 1845* giberne *inadequate, and a number of slightly differing supplementary cartridge pouches, in proofed cloth or leather, were issued between 1867 and 1870, and worn on the right front of the belt. The sabre bayonet is frogged on the left of the waist-belt, the belt loop of the tunic buttoning between the branches of the Y-shaped frog.* **25. Légionnaire, 5^{e} Bn, France, 1870–71:** *A composite, from regulations,* Sabretasche, *and* G d'U no 43. *The* képi *number is in white cloth, the buttons in silver and the old-style epaulettes in green with red crescents.* Sabretasche *shows black gaiters. Sheepskin jerkins were much worn in that winter. The 1869* bidon *is appropriate to a unit raised in France, but old rectangular one- and two-spout canteens were still much used. The pack bears the tent half-poles, and regulation three tent-pegs; the regulation eight-man squad cooking dish —* 'plat à campement' — *and the individual* gamelle *on the tent roll.* **26. Légionnaire, summer campaign dress, 1882:** *The classic soldier of the Saharan and early Tonkin campaigns, this veteran of at least ten years' service is taken from Benigni,* L d'O(1) *and* G d'U no 29. *White cover and neck-flap, either one- or two-piece, hooked and laced to 1873* képi. *The 1872* capote *has the rolled shoulderstraps which replaced the epaulettes on campaign in 1881. The blue sash became regulation in 1882. Coat collar and cuffs were worn open on campaign; the former should have born crimson grenades at this date. White fatigue trousers, 1879, tucked into nine-button white gaiters. Kit includes the 1869 cartridge pocket (the old 1845 model had not entirely disappeared, either), the* musette, *the 1872/73 two-spout, two-litre canteen of African troops, the 1879 pack, its tent roll topped here by the ten-litre* bouthéon *and individual* gamelle, *and the famous 'de Négrier' cartridge pouch across the chest, which is discussed in the text. The rifle is the 1874 Gras.*



Above: Rear detail of the 1860 tunic (G. A. Embleton).
Left: The 1860 *basquine* tunic of *Sergent* Germay, now in the Royal Museum of the Army and Military History, Brussels; details are as described in text (J. Lorette)

The *musette,* its flap fastened with two metal buttons, was officially authorised in April 1861. In March 1865 another item of small kit carried for years was retrospectively approved — the tin mug or *quart,* normally hung by its handle on the strap of the water canteen. The normal weapon for both infantry and mounted squadrons was the 1857 rifle-musket; one survivor recalled that in late 1864 the voltigeur company of, at least, the 3rd Bn received carbines and sabre-bayonets. For further comments on these uniforms, see Plate 6.

Officers were not given a new uniform in 1860. They retained for *grande tenue* a frock very similar to that of the late 1840s and 1850s though now with a yellow collar. The dark blue, red-lined *caban* with Hungarian knot ranking and a detachable hood is specified in the regulations, but the Zouave tunic and *seroual* trousers figure in most portrait photographs. Some 'fantasies' are also to be seen in the pictorial evidence, such as thigh-length soft leather riding boots, and the fancier kinds of local sombrero!

The mounted squadron formed in May 1864 wore the same as the infantry, apart from *pantalon de cheval* and cavalry equipment drawn from Chasseurs d'Afrique stores. In 1865 the cavalry element received an altogether fancier outfit. The

Plate 9: Tonkin, Dahomey and Madagascar 1884—95

27. Légionnaire, Tonkin, 1884–85: *From Benigni,* L d'O(1): *a soldier in hot-weather campaign dress — 1878 helmet in drab cover, and the black, collarless, open-neck* keo. *The knapsack was carried by coolies; here the small kit is carried in the* musette *and the rolled* capote. *The belt supports the 1869 cartridge pocket and the bayonet for the Gras rifle. Benigni shows a plain white 'de Négrier' pouch, but we substitute the fascinating example sketched and described in detail in* L d'O(1): *of old crimson trouser cloth, slung on straps made from trouser braces, it has a scalloped edge closed by small china buttons, and lavish embroidery in white thread. The central inscription identifies it as the property of 9856 Légionnaire Baumler, of 3rd Coy, 4th Bn:*

LE
4B BAUMLER 3C
9856

28. Clairon, Madagascar, 1895: *Largely from Benigni,* L d'O(1). *Drab helmet cover; white fatigue* bourgeron *and trousers worn with blue sash; collar folded open and down; trouser bottoms 'enveloped' over boots, after Mahut sketch. 1892 Y-straps, 1888 pouches and 1886/93 Lebel rifle, the latter carried horizontally between the shoulders and the* barda. **29. Légionnaire, Dahomey, 1892:** *From a Mahut sketch, and items in the Legion Museum. White fatigue trousers worn with the collarless 1892–99 colonial* paletot *jacket, decorated at neck and cuff with the Legion's dark blue braid. Two 1877/79 'coffin' pouches are worn on the belt, and a substantial black oilcloth 'de Négrier' pouch is slung on the chest; the rifle is the Gras.* **30. Soldat de 1ère classe, 2e RE, Tonkin, 1886:** *From Benigni,* L d'O(1) — *a soldier* en tenue de repos, *in cold weather walking-out dress based on the Marine Infantry tunic. From this year the trousers were replaced by Marine dark blue, piped red. The 1878 helmet has a 'fantasy' decoration in the form of a brass Marine Artillery grenade. The Legion epaulettes were officially withdrawn between February 1885 and January 1887, but Benigni shows them; it is unlikely the order was obeyed in far-off Indo-China. Note regimental collar numbers, five-year service chevron on upper left arm above marksmanship badge, and ranking on both forearms. For walking-out the belt is worn over the sash, with the Gras sidearm.*

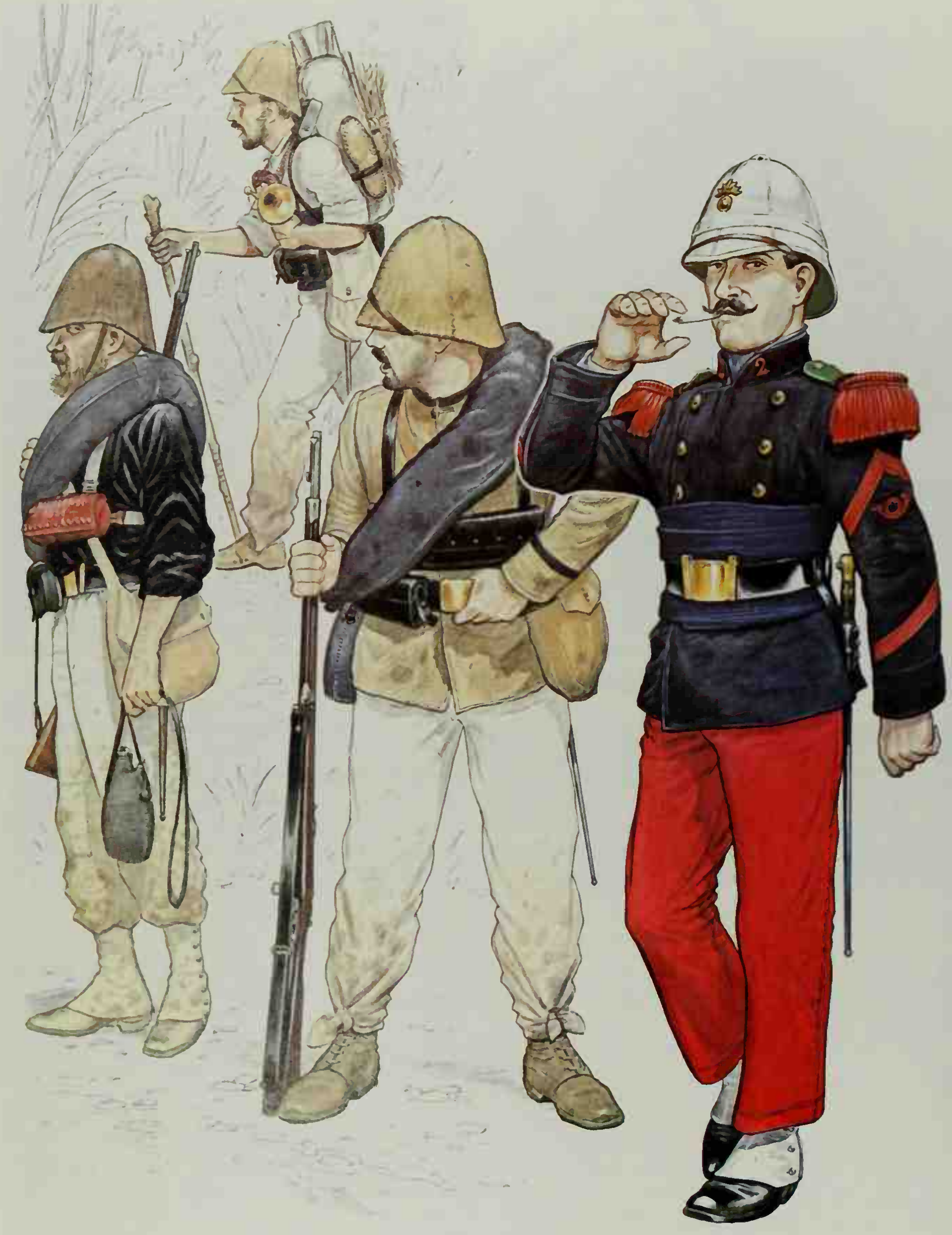


Plate 9: Tonkin, Dahomey and Madagascar, 1884-95

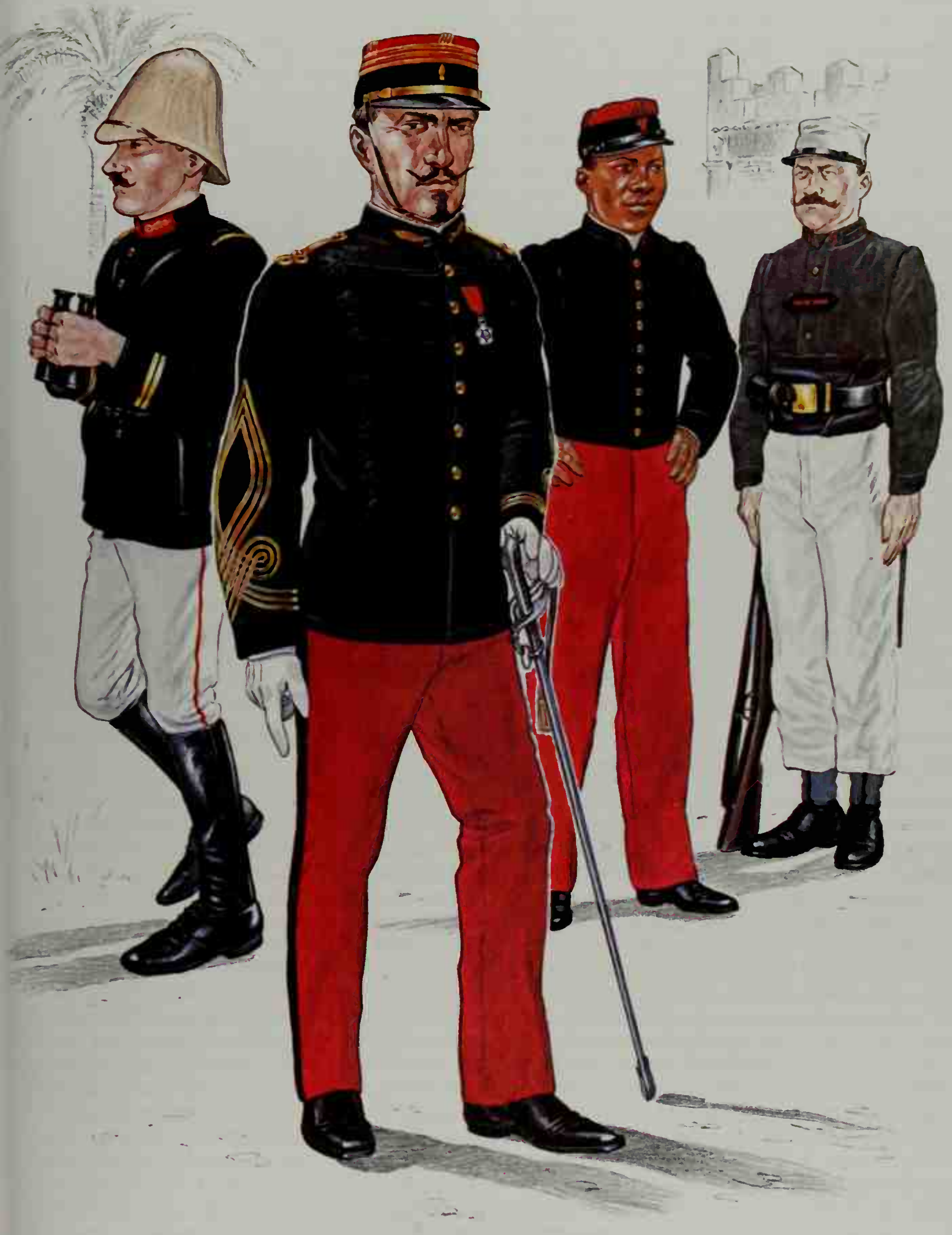


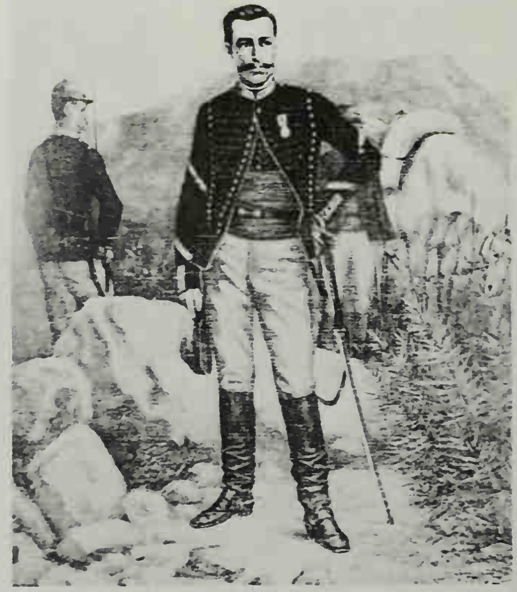
Plate 10: The 1880s-90s

basquine tunic was tricked out with three rows of buttons, and lengths of black frogging set closely across the chest. (Presumably this was reserved for 'number one dress'?) The riding trousers acquired a dark blue stripe, and the *képi* band, a small red double Hungarian knot motif — gold for officers. See Plate 7 for these features, and an interesting variation on officer's uniform.

The 1867 reforms

Even good jokes must come to an end, and the regulations of 2 December 1867 rescued the French infantryman from a costume which he had spent much effort and ingenuity in trying to avoid over the past seven years.

The *képi* was officially reinstated, with slightly reduced proportions; the regulation pattern now measured 80mm high at the front and 140mm at the rear, with a 35mm band bearing, in the Legion, a crimson five-point star. The peak, now 45mm deep at the centre, was still of 'rectangular' shape with rounded corners. The new Line shako for *grande tenue* was probably never worn by the Legion, but is described for completeness. Of felt, with a crimson crown and dark blue 35mm band, it was 115mm high at the front, with a sloping 155mm back. The peak resembled that of the *képi*, and yellow piping followed the same pattern as the *képi's* blue piping. A yellow five-point star was to



Interesting painting of a senior *sous-officier* of the Legion cavalry squadron in Mexico, 1865, by von Prost. This is discussed in the text; compare with Colour Plate 7, fig. 21 (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

Plate 10: Uniforms of the 1880s–90s

31. Lieutenant, Madagascar, 1895: *From* Sabretasche, *a written description in* L d'O(3), *and photographs of general contemporary styles. The khaki-covered helmet is worn with a dark blue single-breasted tunic, and white trousers, piped red. Ranking is in flat cuff braids; the shape of the collar patch is noteworthy. Gaiters of leather or blackened canvas, buttoned at the outside.* **32. Capitaine, 1er RE, grande tenue, 1890:** *From photographs in* KB *and* G d'U no 29, *and regulations in* Galot & Robert, Morel, *etc. The* képi *bears the gold grenade which Morel ascribes to 1872 regulations — see text for discussion of this point. The second, gold-bordered chinstrap worn down was the mark of an officer on duty. The 1883 dolman, with non-regulation black collar bearing the Legion's gold grenade, is embellished with gold trefoil shoulderknots for parade dress. Rank is indicated by triple knots of gold* soutache *on the sleeves. The trousers have a 45mm black silk stripe. The 1882 infantry officer's sword has the black and gold parade knot.* **33. Légionnaire, 2^{e} RE, barrack dress, 1886:** *From a uniform in the reserve collection of the Berne Museum. The 1873* képi *bears a red cut-out grenade on the band; there are red-painted ventilators in the sides of the crown. The* veste *has collar patches of ground-colour with red cut-out regimental numbers, nine front buttons, plain cuffs and shoulders, and, invisible on the left ribs, an upward-buttoning belt loop of ground-colour, with leather lining, and a regimental button at the rounded top end.* **34. Soldat de 1^{ere} classe, 1er RE, winter drill order, 1898:** *From Benigni drawing and Brunon notes,* L d'O(1). *The* bourgeron *of coat cloth replaced the* veste *from 1887 to 1899; it had two front buttons, and ranking was on buttoned chest tabs. Short coat-cloth gaiters have four black horn buttons at the outside, and black leather strips front and back; they were used* circa *1897–1903. While the neck-flap was officially khaki from 1897, the cover itself remained white for most purposes. Photographs of the period 1897–1914 show white covers without flaps, worn in barracks; and, in the field, white covers with khaki or white flaps, and, increasingly, pale khaki covers without flap.*

be worn on the band. There was a cockade held by a yellow loop and a button centrally on the front of the crown. Above it a double pompon was to be worn, in practice ressembling a large above a small sphere. The top sphere was, against original regulations but in fact, always red. The bottom one was red in the grenadier and yellow in the voltigeur companies, and in battalion colours with brass company numbers for fusiliers: — dark blue, crimson, yellow, sky blue, orange and green for 1st to 6th Bns respectively.

A new double-breasted tunic of dark blue had two rows of seven buttons, a standing collar of crimson piped blue, and crimson piping down the off-set front join, round the top of the straight, patchless cuffs, on the *brides* and belt loop, and in a *Soubise* pattern in the rear. Ranking and epaulettes were unchanged; flank companies were supposed to wear blue ornaments on the collar, but the supression of flank companies throughout the Army the following month probably overtook this order.

The nine-button *veste* was restored to legitimacy in June 1868, now with a 40mm collar without *écussons,* and with absolutely plain shoulders and cuffs. It remained the normal dress of privates and corporals when not wearing the *capote.* This latter reverted to a stand collar in 1867, but lower and with rounded corners, decorated with three-point dark blue *écussons.* Of the usual *gris de fer bleuté,* it had two rows of six buttons. Crimson trousers reverted to a conventional cut. The *jambières* were gratefully forgotten; the conventional white half-gaiters were improved by a leather strap replacing the cloth one under the instep from about 1866.

The equipment was altered only with the issue of the 1866 bolt-action Chassepot rifle in the late 1860s. From circa 1868 the old 1831 'cabbage-cutter' sabre finally disappeared; the Chassepot's *'yataghan'* sabre-bayonet was an adequate sidearm in itself for those personnel previously issued the sabre. It had a Y-shaped frog, and the tunic, *veste* and *capote* belt loops were normally buttoned up over the belt between its branches. From circa 1869 a variety of supplementary cartridge pouches were issued in addition to the old *giberne* on the back of the belt; these were usually worn at front right.

The supression in January 1868 of élite companies throughout the Army gave the Legion, for the first time, its own truly distinctive epaulette, in the colours worn today: all enlisted personnel wore an epaulette with a green strap and red crescent and fringes. In the absence of flank companies, it was decided to add a new grade to the Army, to mark the status of good soldiers; the 'soldier first class' would wear a single scarlet diagonal bar on each forearm. A ministerial decision of 7 October

Plate 11: Campaign Dress, Morocco, 1907

35. Adjudant, Compagnies Montées: *From photographs, particularly* G d'U no 33. *Hot weather field uniform. The* képi*'s black* jugulaire coulissante *worn over the cover is edged with silver lace with a red 'light'. The white uniform worn by officers and* adjudant sous-officiers *was basically that of the Colonial Infantry, with a gold grenade on a midnight blue 'teardrop' on the collar. Flat rank braids on midnight blue backing were worn at the cuff, held by thread loops; this rank had a single silver ring with a red 'light'. The revolver is the 1873, carried by* adjudants *until 1910.* Adjudants *had a mule to themselves, but still had to march hard while it rested — the stick is a necessity rather than an affectation.* **36. Caporal, Compagnies Montées:** *From photographs, particularly* G d'U no 33. *Helmet with light khaki cover; the 1873* képi *with white cover and flap was more popular. White 1882* bourgeron *with chest rank tab; variations of the blouse are illustrated elsewhere — one type opened right down the front, the other had only a two-button, 32cm opening, and either could appear centrally buttoned or with a tab collar buttoned at the right. The blue sash covers the waist of the blouse and 1879 fatigue trousers, here tucked into the leather anklets generally worn from* circa *1903, although examples of the coat-cloth type would still be common* circa *1907. Belt, 1892 Y-straps, three 1888 pouches, canteen, haversack and slung Lebel rifle.*

The mule has an artillery saddle and bridle, including single bit and collier d'attache. *Blue saddle blanket. In front of the saddle, two leather wallets hold personal kit; on top, a 20-kilo 'sausage' oats sack, and, on top of that, the rolled tent, with the two greatcoats inside. Camp utensils, tools, tent pegs, and kindling top it off. Two artillery* 'bissacs' *in unbleached canvas and leather are slung close behind the rider's legs, topped by rolled blankets and two reserve canteens. The mules were taught to drink from the smaller spout.* **37. Légionnaire, probably VI/1er RE, Casablanca:** *From a photograph,* Illustrated London News, *21 September 1907; this is a composite of two soldiers. Note neck-flap tucked under* kêpi, *old-fashioned gaiters, an old rectangular canteen, Lebel and 1888 pouches.*

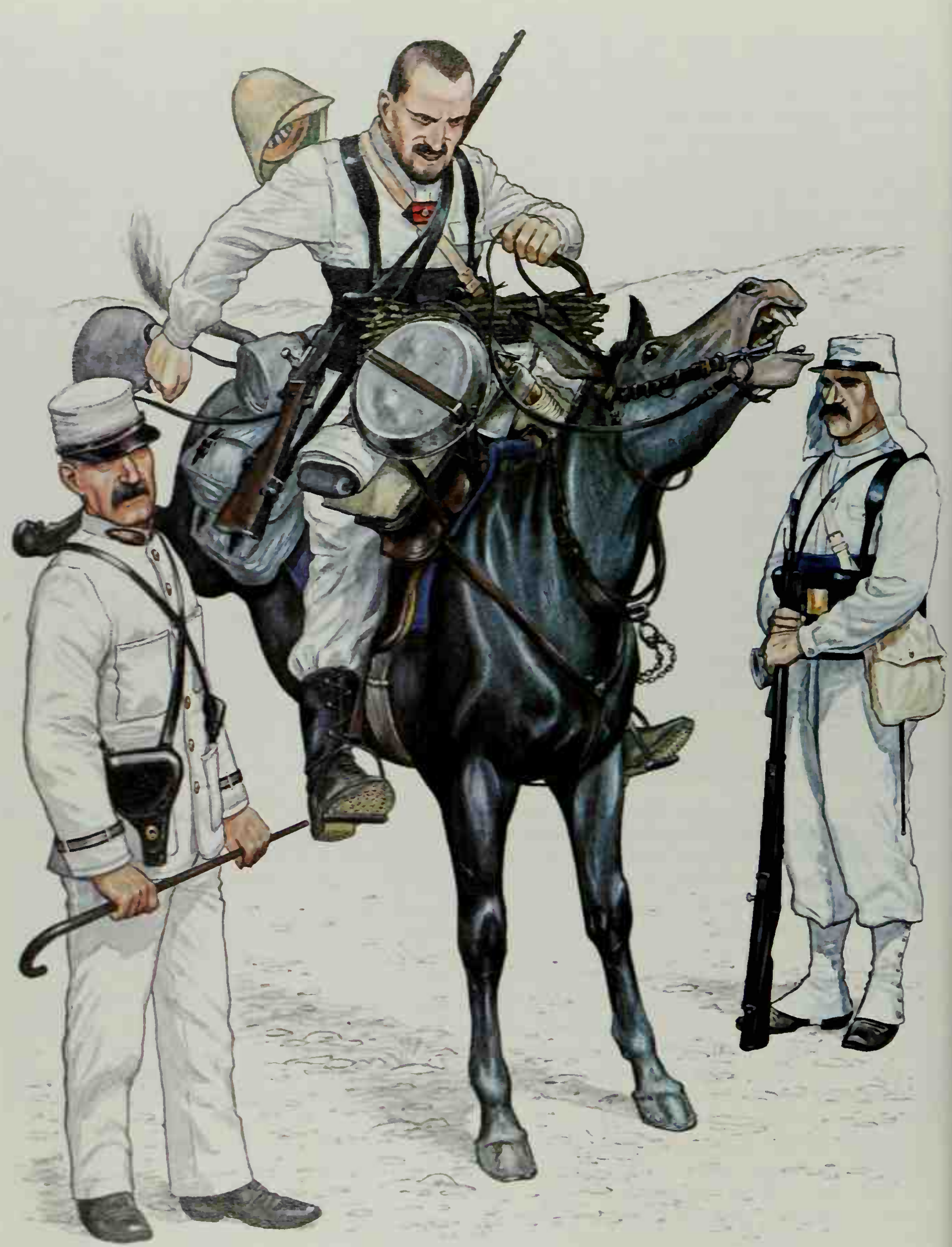


Plate 11: Campaign Dress, Morocco, 1907

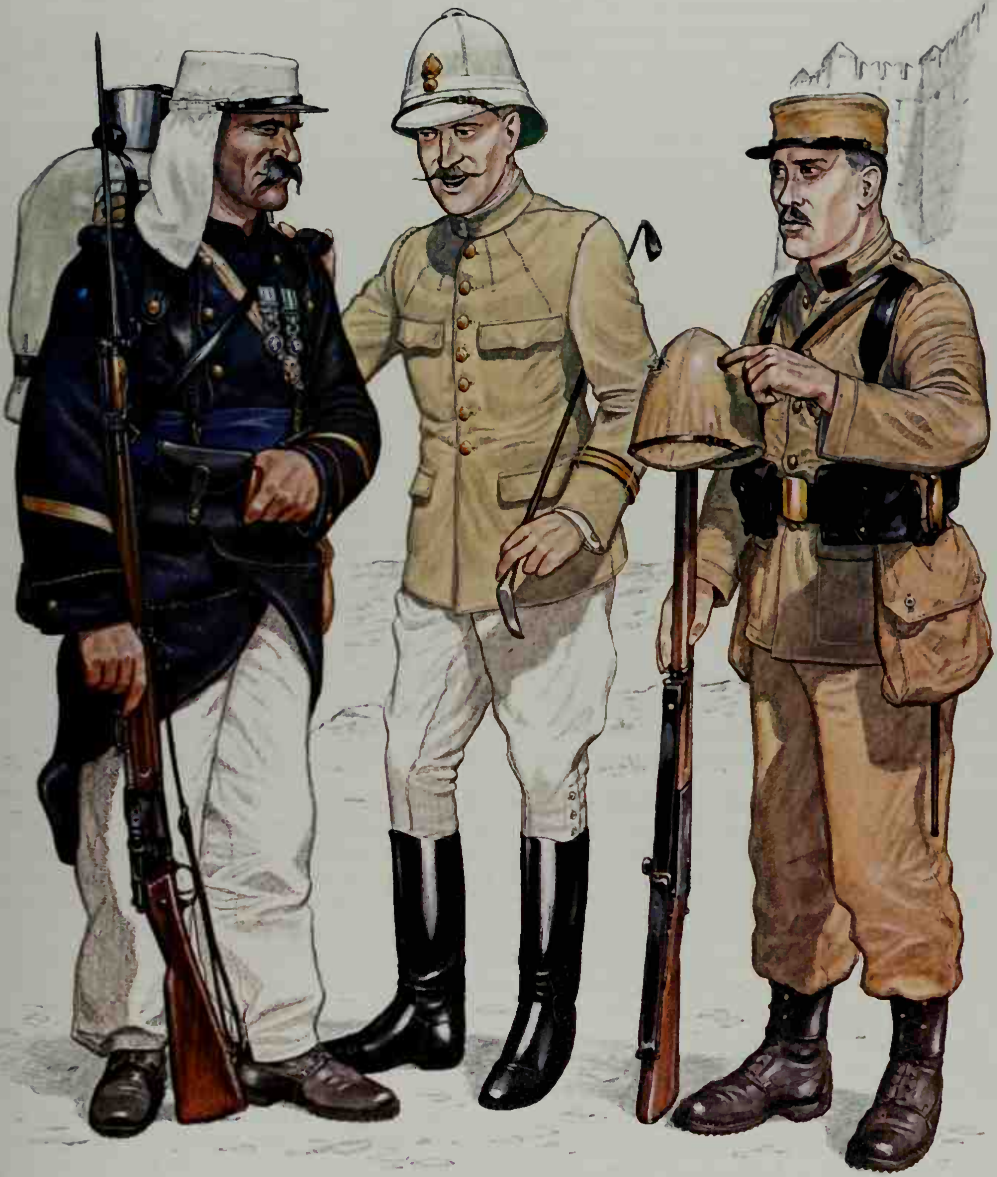


Plate 12: Campaign Dress, North Africa, 1903-11

1871 supressed the crimson piping on the tunic; it seems likely that this order may have been delayed in the observance until old tunics were worn out; or at least that piping may have been removed over a period of time.

Officers were given a tunic similar to that of the men, but in two qualities: for *grande tenue* the cuff was plain, and epaulettes and gorget were worn, while for *tenue journalière* these were omitted and Hungarian knot ranking was worn on the sleeves. Trousers reverted to a conventional cut. Apart from minor details such as the cross-section of the lace used on the *képi,* there were no other immediate changes. In June 1869, however, the *caban* disappeared; in its place officers in the field were to wear a blue-grey *capote* similar to that of their men, but with ranking in the form of flat gold and silver braid rings round the cuffs. In November 1871 the colour was ordered changed to dark blue. In the Army of the Loire in the later stages of the war of 1870–71, the cuff ring ranking often replaced the Hungarian knots on officers' 'number two' tunics. A popular alternative to the tunic was the *paletot,* a plain dark blue double-breasted jacket copied from contemporary naval uniform, which also had cuff ring ranking.

The uniform prescribed for the battalion of volunteers formed in France by the decree of 26 July 1870 was almost identical, but 'metal' and lace were silver rather than gold. A battalion number ('5') was worn on the *képi* band, in white or silver as appropriate (for further comment, see Plate 8).

Plate 12: Campaign Dress, North Africa, 1903–11

38. Sergent, 2^e RE, Figuig, circa **1908:** *From a photograph. Note loosely-bloused trouser bottoms, sash worn over* capote, *rolled shoulderstraps to retain equipment straps, and insignia of rank, unit and service. Red collar numbers on ground-colour patches are normal on surviving coats in the Legion Museum and elsewhere; Milassin states that numbers were also seen in dark blue. Gold rank stripes on the forearms, above red/gold piping apparently indicating re-enlistment for NCOs — this is discussed in the text. Colonial and Moroccan medals.* **39. Lieutenant, Compagnie Montée, Sud-Oranais,** circa **1903:** *From a photograph, and Mahut sketch, of Lt Selchauhansen, killed at El Moungar, 2 September 1903. The helmet bears a 'fantasy' insignia, an Infantry grenade. Officers generally wore white or khaki field uniforms to match the dress of their men. Khaki jackets began to appear* circa *1895; all had stand collars, usually with grenade insignia as Plate 11, fig. 35. Some had four flapless pockets; some, four pockets with flaps but concealed buttons; some again, from* circa *1913, had pleated patch pockets with visible buttons, and shoulderstraps. Rank lace was worn round the cuffs. Normal legwear with khaki jackets was a pair of khaki breeches with either leggings or dark blue puttees. Straight khaki trousers were also worn, confined in the same way; popular, but non-regulation, were these white breeches and top-boots. (Mounted company officers rode horses.)* Képis *were worn in the field with or without white or khaki covers.* **40. Légionnaire, 1er RE, Morocco,** circa **1911:** *A composite from photographs, and general material in* G d'U no 35, *illustrating field uniform of the later Moroccan penetration. The khaki-covered* képi *and the helmet were in fact alternatives. Colonial campaign uniform of 1903 — detail differences are discussed in the text. The stand collar was normally unhooked and folded down and back when in the field; we show regulation patches, in red with blue numbers. A second* musette *often replaced the knapsack.*

4

North Africa, 1871-1914

The aftermath of the French defeat in Europe saw widespread revolts break out in Algeria. It must have seemed to the tribes a natural time to try conclusions with the humiliated French, but it showed poor judgement: the French Army was in no mood to be tolerant, and the risings were stamped out with some firmness as soon as sufficient men had returned from Europe to mount large-scale columns. The main centres were, as always, Kabylia; and the arid hills in the south-west of Oran Province, near the Moroccan border. This empty country had been penetrated but not yet pacified, and the ill-defined frontier, as well as the edge of the Sahara proper, offered the war-bands easy refuge when they were sated with looting, burning and killing. The main trouble-makers in this region were the tribe of Ouled Sidi Cheikh, whose leader in 1871 was named Si-Kaddour-ben-Hamza. They were joined by opportunist tribes from over the Moroccan border.

While serving with a reconnaissance column under Cdt Marchand, the 6th Coy, 4th Bn of the Legion — composed largely of young recruits — distinguished itself in a hard fight against Si-Kaddour's riders. Over in Constantine Province, a detachment of some 600 légionnaires took part in the supression of revolt in Kabylia. By August 1871 the chiefs were coming in to talk terms and by the end of the year relative peace had been re-established in the settled areas, although the wide-open frontiers to the south and west promised further trouble before too long.

The Legion, commanded by Col de Mallaret from January 1871, settled down to a monotonous period of labouring and routine patrolling; the HQ was at Mascara, with battalions at Mascara, Saïda, Sidi-bel-Abbès and Géryville. Recruiting was healthy. In March 1875 the official title of the corps reverted from Régiment Etranger to Légion Etrangère.

The year 1881 was something of a milestone for the Legion. It brought hard fighting and exhaust-

Plate 13: Parade Dress, 1900–12

A 'composite' colour party front rank, from contemporary photographs; for parade and walking out there was no single overall regulation about the combination of uniform items to be worn — tunic, capote, *crimson or white trousers, even the* veste *occasionally. Unit orders specified the required combination each day.* **41. Sergent, 1er RE, Sidi-bel-Abbès** circa **1912:** *From a photograph,* L'Illustration, *19 July 1913. The* képi *has the gold false chinstrap and second, internally-fixed, gold-bordered strap ordered for* sous-officiers rengagés *in 1874 and 1912 respectively — but the gold grenade, and gold collar patch cyphers, ordered in 1887, are not worn. The 1899 tunic has gold forearm ranking; the gold/red piping at the cuff, discussed on page 73; a gold grenade and bugle marksmanship insignia on the left arm; and epaulettes with gold thread in the crescents. The gold bugle-horn badge on chains —* épinglette *— slung across the medals with parade dress marks first prize in an annual shooting competition; silver and bronze classes were also worn, sometimes more than one simultaneously.* **42. Lieutenant, 2e RE, Saïda,** circa **1900:** *This and the next figure are based on a photograph in* L d'O(1). *Legion officers wore the tunic of February 1893 regulations with non-regulation black collar and cuff-patches. Rank is indicated by cuff braids, and also, for parades, by gold epaulettes — that on his right shoulder is a fringeless* contre-epaulette. *Otherwise there are no major changes from the uniform illustrated on Plate 10.* **43. Soldat de 1ere classe, 2e RE, Saïda,** *circa* **1900:** *The wearing of the knapsack, complete with tent and poles, with the parade uniform is interesting. The chinstrap was worn down for parades. Note old white gaiters; red marksman's insignia on left upper arm, beneath two five-year service chevrons; and red cuff piping, worn in combination with these chevrons. The* Médaille *is worn, with campaign awards for Colonial, Tonkin, and Dahomey service.*

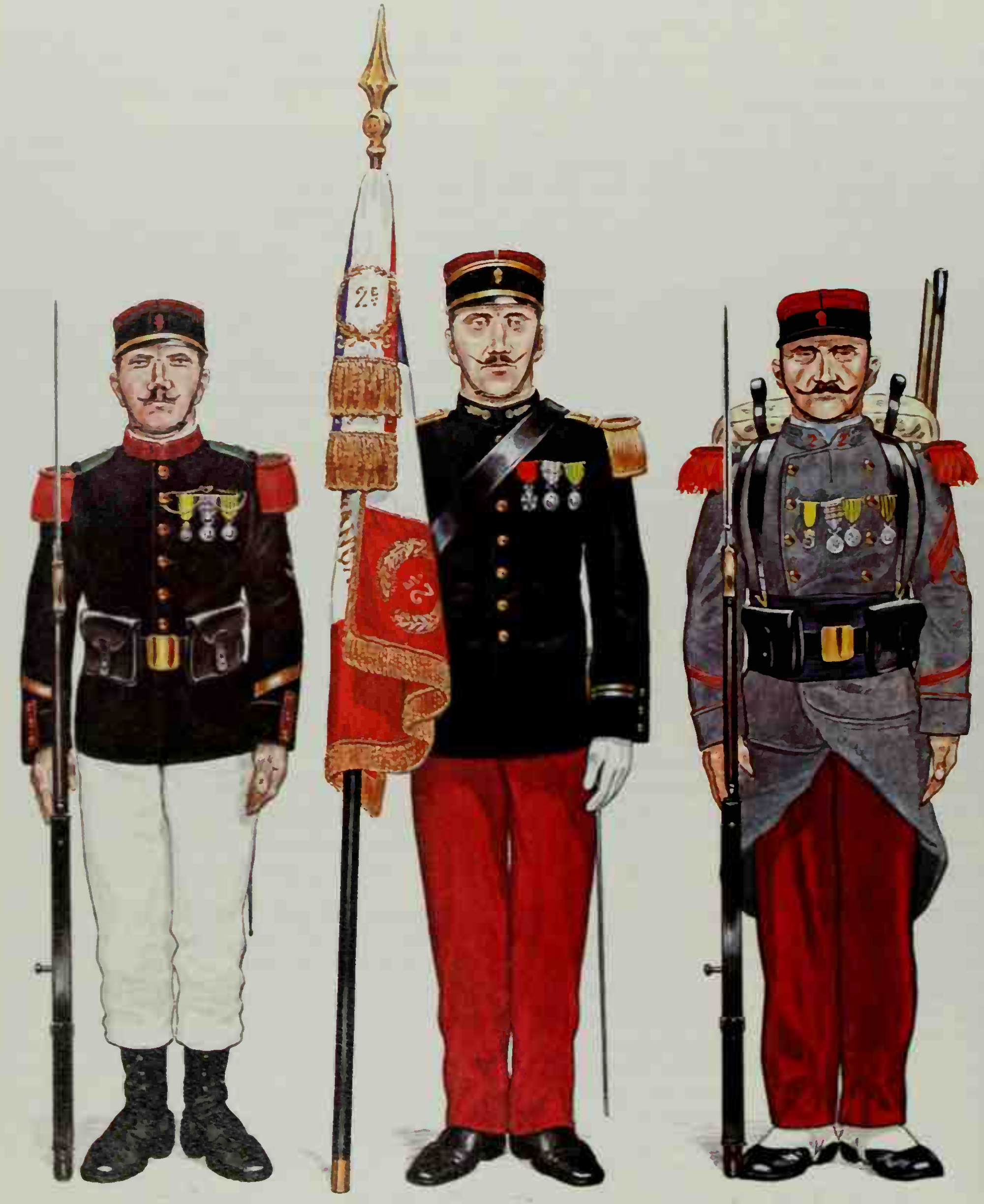


Plate 13: Parade Dress, 1900-12

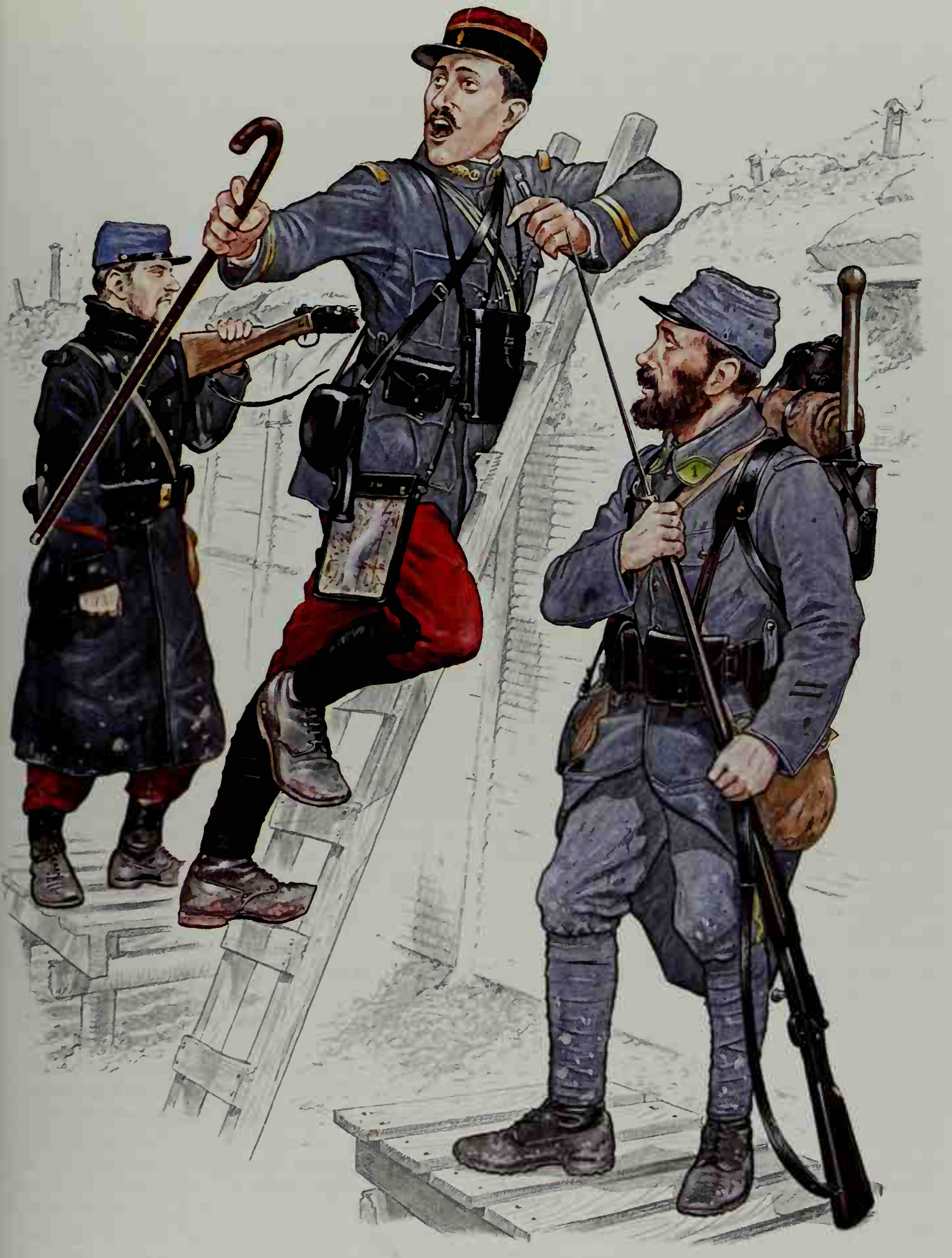


Plate 14: France, 1914-15

ing desert marches, two important reforms of organisation, and a new commander, whose instant affection for his hard-bitten mercenaries would ensure that the Legion would be kept in the military limelight on two continents. The late 1870s had seen it slipping quietly into the rôle of a labour corps; the 1880s would halt that process abruptly.

In April 1881, profiting from the withdrawal of French units for the occupation of Tunisia, a very able chief named Bou-Amama led the tribes of the south-west into a holy war. A French column left Géryville on 14 May, under Col Innocenti; it included a *bataillon de marche* drawn from the Legion's 1st and 2nd Bns. At Chellala on 19 May it ran into some 4,000 warriors. The Legion, in the van, repulsed frontal attacks; but the French right flank, screened by unenthusiastic native irregular horse, was crumbled by Bou-Amama's riders, who massacred the rearguard and the baggage convoy. The Arabs withdrew after a period of bloody hand-to-hand fighting, but the mauled column was also forced to fall back.

Several other columns were assembled, the Legion's 3rd Bn serving with that led by Col de Mallaret from Sidi-bel-Abbès to Le Kreider, where it joined other troops under the overall command of Gen Detrie. For two months the French columns tramped wearily around the desert trying vainly to bring Bou-Amama to battle, while his elusive bands carried out damaging raids and massacres — notably, at Khalfallah on 11 June.

In July 1881 command of the Legion passed to Col de Négrier. This tough and energetic officer only held command for two years, but in that time he re-invigorated the Legion. He and his unlovely regiment took to one another at once, and he never forgot them; it was at the request of the newly promoted Gen de Négrier that the Legion provided troops for Indo-China (see next chapter), thus ensuring renewed public and military attention to their qualities.

In October 1881 a ministerial circular authorised, for the first time, the open enlistment of Frenchmen in the Legion. As the years passed this reform would have beneficial consequences. The type of adventurous young man who would deliberately opt for the Legion, rather than for some Line unit in a home garrison, was a great asset to the corps. The increasing numbers of time-expired men returning home to France would raise the consciousness of the French public, and improve the Legion's 'image'.

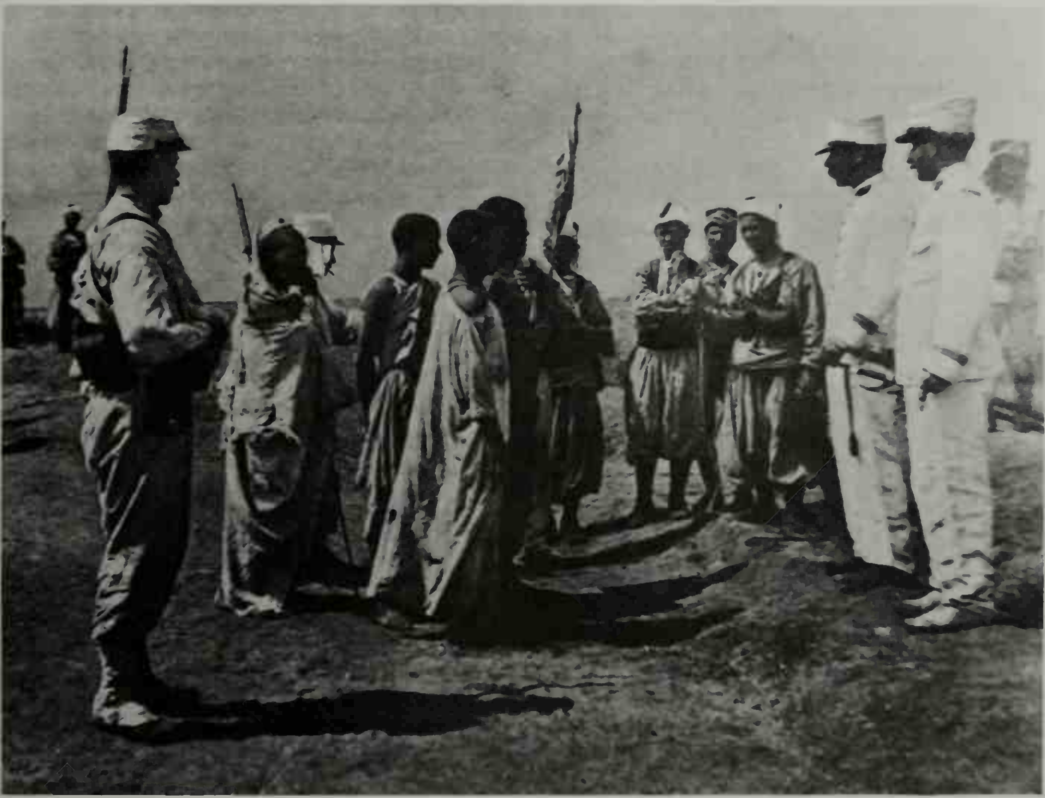
In October and November, de Négrier led the 1st and 2nd Bns in successful drives against the Ahmours — a Moroccan tribe who had crossed into Algeria — and the Ouled Selim. Brisk actions were fought at a mountain named Beni-Smir, and at the Mir-Djebel. In December another column was formed from Zouaves, Tirailleurs, and the 3rd and 4th Bns of the Legion. It included, for the first time, a new type of unit, one which would come to be associated intimately with the Foreign Legion. In each of the three regiments of the column, one company was issued with mules and designated '*compagnie montée*'.

The mounted companies of the Legion would bring new fame to the corps, from this date right up to the early 1930s; this is therefore the place for a brief digression on the subject.

The mounted company was intended to give the

Plate 14: France, 1914–15

44. Soldat de 1ere classe, 2e Rgt de Marche du 2e Etranger, Craonelle, October 1914: *From photographs of American volunteers of 'C' Bn of the 2/2e RE, and general material in* G d'U no 26. *Note the one-litre* bidon *from Metropolitan magazines, contrasting with the two-litre size used in Africa, and the blue denim* képi *cover.* **45. Lieutenant of a Rgt de Marche Etranger, autumn 1914:** *A composite, from general material in* G d'U no 26, *and photographs of officers of the Italian 4/1e RE. Initially the* képi *was worn uncovered by officers. A sword was usually carried by infantry subalterns, but in the Legion a cane had been the norm for generations. The field jacket, in* gris de fer bleuté, *is one of a number of slightly differing patterns, privately purchased. Rank is indicated by gold* brides *and by cuff rings. A horseshoe-rolled coat was quite common.* **46. Caporal, 2/1er RE, Artois, spring 1915:** *A composite, from material in* G d'U no 39. *Horizon blue was worn by the Legion during 1915; the four-pocket coat of September 1914 pattern bears green distinctions, and the yellow* écussons *worn briefly until suppressed in April 1915. Yellow trouser piping was sometimes seen long after that date. Note small wartime forearm ranking, two* musettes, *and buckle of new 1915 brown leather equipment worn on left hip, a feature visible in many front-line photographs of the day.*



Tribesmen being questioned by officers of the Legion (probably the VI/1er RE) near Casablanca during the first weeks of the Moroccan campaign. The photograph was published in *Illustrated London News* on 21 September 1907. The captain and lieutenant wear white uniforms with cuff ranking, gold grenades on blue 'teardrops' on the collars, and in one case, gold epaulette *brides*. One tunic has breast pockets, the other does not. Colour Plate 11, fig. 37 is a composite of the two légionnaires on the left (R. G. Harris)

Plate 15: France, 1916–18

47. Sergent, RMLE, September 1916: *From a photograph of a guard of honour, Château de Ricquebourg, 11 September 1916. Blue sash and* fourragère *were sometimes worn for parades; the latter is that of the* Croix de Guerre, *awarded on 5 June 1916 for the regiment's second citation in Army orders. The khaki uniform was worn from early 1916; note collar patches with green piping and cypher of parent regiment. Front-line service chevrons were worn on the left arm from 1915. A personal award of the* Croix de Guerre *is worn. The rifle is the '07/15 model.* **48. Adjudant-chef, RMLE, 1917–18:** *From photographs, and general material in* G d'U no 39. *Senior warrant officers wore uniforms and insignia of officer's pattern; note gold cuff bar with red 'light', and gold grenades on collars. Officers and warrant officers wore gold front-line service chevrons. Sidearms were the 1892 revolver, the Star automatic or the Ruby automatic, both the latter being Spanish weapons purchased by France in quantity.* **49. Fusilier-mitrailleur, RMLE, 1918:** *From photographs, and* G d'U no 39. *Each section had two two-man teams with the Chauchat automatic rifle, and this team No 1 holds that miserably unreliable weapon. Lightened* tenue d'assaut *consisted of belt equipment, two* musettes *(either normal pattern or smaller single-button* musette d'assaut), *tent roll and 1916 M3 gasmask canister. Two two-magazine Chauchat pouches are slung on the belt and Y-straps. Gunners also wore a pistol holstered on the right side of the belt, invisible from this angle.*

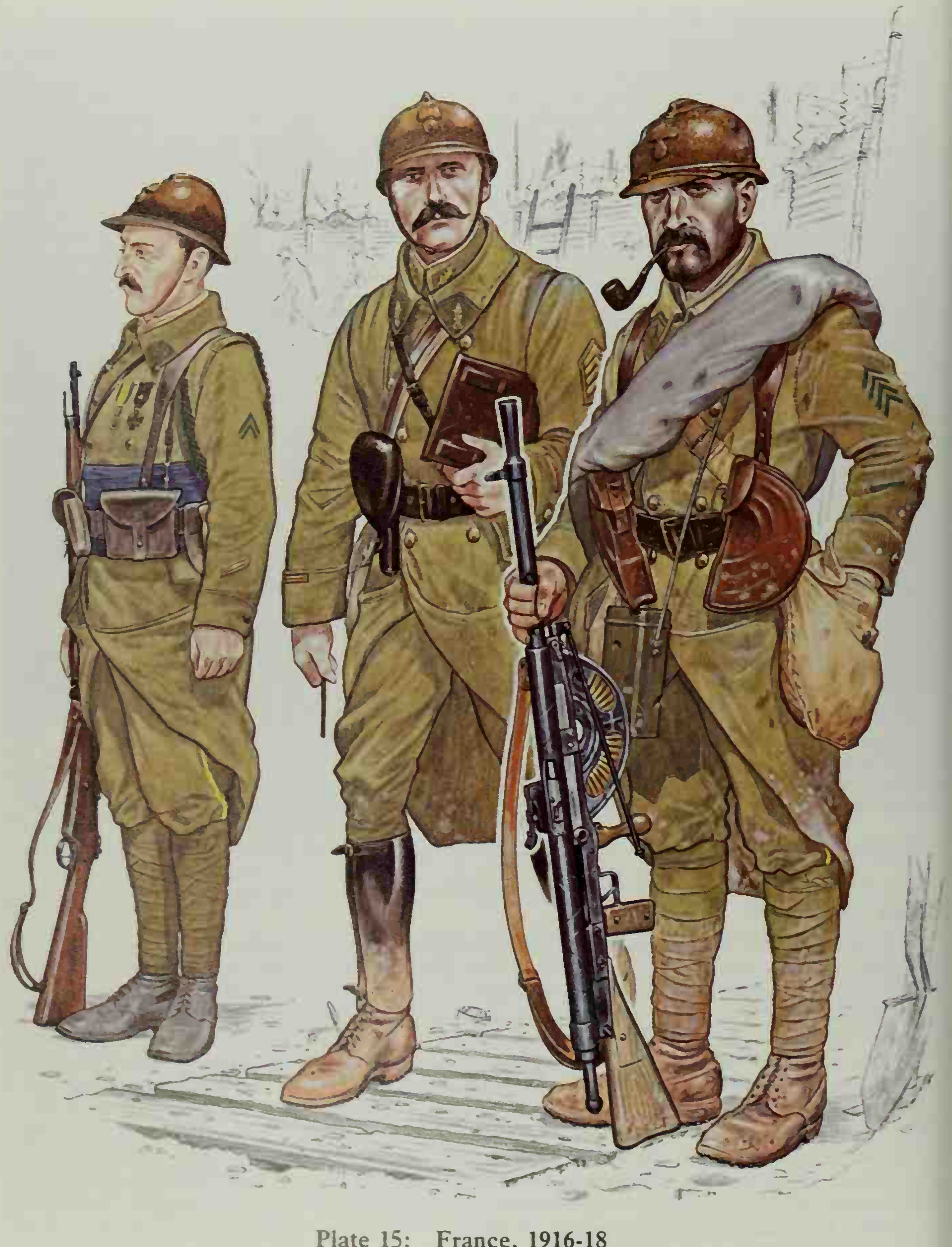


Plate 15: France, 1916-18

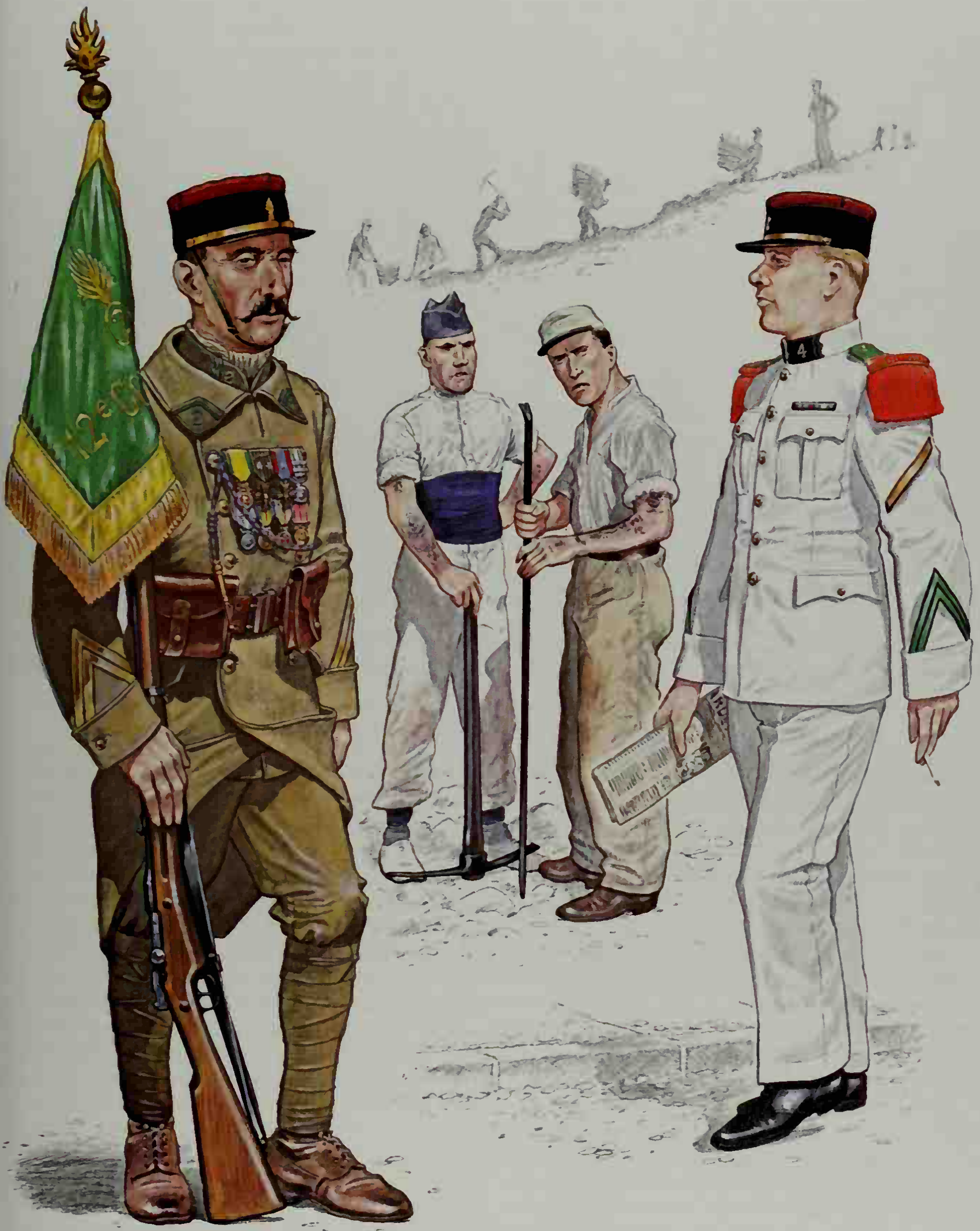


Plate 16: Morocco, 1920s-30s

French a combination of mobility, endurance, and firepower when hunting the nomadic Arab warbands over huge areas of arid wilderness. It was soon apparent that only the Legion could meet the challenge fully, and the mounted companies organised by other regiments from time to time were progressively disbanded; by the first years of the 1900s this type of unit was unique to the Legion. Personnel were carefully selected for their fitness and mental stability, and served only two years before being returned — if they survived — to a less punishing duty.

The essence of the idea was simplicity itself. Each pair of men was given a saddled mule. One man marched — often at the double — beside the mule on which his mate rode. At hourly intervals they changed places; the march could be kept up for as much as fifteen hours a day, with only the briefest halts to change places. All rations and equipment for men and beasts were carried on the mules; there were no knapsacks, no baggage wagons, just a file of riders with men marching at their stirrups. This type of unit was often sent off into the wilderness independently, and operated hundreds of kilometres from support, in a landscape so lonely and oppressive that the monotonous, exhausting marches could threaten a man's sanity. Food was basic in the extreme, the water scarce and often bad, and comforts non-existent. It was a terribly hard life, even in the context of the old Legion; but the achievements of the mounted companies, who soon came to be regarded as an élite within an élite, were astonishing. One may cite the march of two mounted companies of the 2^{e} RE under Cdt Letulle, who set out from Géryville in April 1900, and returned 72 days later having covered 1825 kms (1,134 miles) over the terrible terrain of the Great Western Erg. Over shorter distances, daily marches of 50 kms (31 miles) were common. (Readers who may recall the occasional records achieved by Wellington's light infantry, and who may be tempted to be unimpressed by a figure of 50 kms a day, should study photographs of south-west Algerian terrain.)

The numbers of mounted companies raised by each regiment varied considerably as the years passed, depending on the operational rôle and area of responsibility of the parent unit. They tended to be given high company numbers within the regiment, which is confusing; note that the French *29^{e} Compagnie Montée* translates in English as '29th (Mounted) Company', and does not mean that the regiment had 29 mounted companies.

In April 1882 a section of the first mounted company, together with a Legion infantry company, covered themselves with glory in a famous

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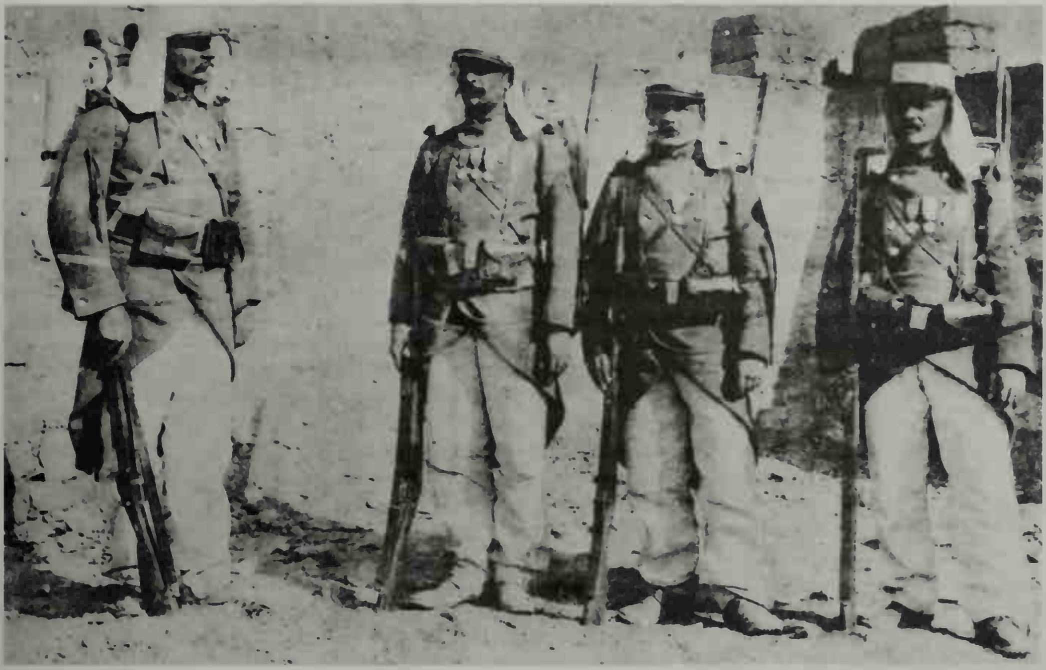
Plate 16: Morocco, 1920s–30s

50. Sergent porte-fanion, III/2^{e} REI, circa **1925:** *A composite figure. Benigni's plate in* L d'O(1) *shows a 3^{e} REI sergent wearing wartime* écussons *on the* capote, *none being visible on the tunic. Milassin lists several alternative styles, including this type with gold NCO cyphers. Benigni shows two large gold service chevrons; photographs in* KB *show 1er REI NCOs wearing small gold examples in the early 1920s, but officially they were not worn before October 1929. The* fourragère *is that of the* Croix de Guerre TOE — *'for exterior theatres of operations' — won by this battalion in the Tache de Taza, 1923. (The VI/1er REI won the same award.) The company* fanion *is that of the 12th Coy, taken from a colour photograph in* KB*; it bears the word* 'Compagnie' *spelt out after the '12^{e}' in gold capitals. Formed from 16th Coy, IV/4^{e} REI in February 1921, the 12th fought at Oum-Jeniba, Bou-Khamoudj, Immouzer and Djebel Idrane before being transformed, in April 1926, into the III/2^{e}'s machine gun company.* **51. (Right) Caporal-chef, 4^{e} REI,** circa **1931:** *From notes and sketches by Charles Milassin. Regimentally-authorised white walking-out uniform, worn from the early 1920s; in the early 1930s the collar was changed to the fall type. All insignia are on blue backing, temporarily fixed; collar cyphers are gold for this rank and upwards, and piping green. The* brides *of the NCO-pattern epaulettes are gold with red 'lights'. Ranking is worn on both sleeves.* **52 and 53. Légionnaires, summer fatigues, 1920s:** *The white fatigue* bourgeron *and trousers were worn in many cases right up to World War II, with or without the sash according to unit orders. The light khaki drill summer uniform was seen side by side with them. The* képi *cover, worn only for undress duty and in the field, was normally pale khaki, often washed out or deliberately bleeched white at personal, or unit commander's, whim. Canvas* espadrilles *and native sandals had both been accepted as fatigue and campaign alternatives to issue boots long before World War I, especially in mounted companies. The blue-grey coat cloth* bonnet de police, *sometimes with red piping on the turn-up, was also in widespread use as off-duty and fatigue headgear from the turn of the century. We take the* légionnaire *who wears it entirely from a colour* autochrome *credited to Gervais Courtellemont in* National Geographic Magazine, *February 1928.*



Fine study of a sergeant and three légionnaires of the 2^e RE in campaign uniform near Figuig, 1908 (See Colour Plate 12, fig. 38)

engagement in a shallow valley called Chott Tigri, near Haci-bel-Salem in the Ouled Sidi Cheikh country west of Géryville. At this period a major programme of surveying and mapping was being carried out in this almost unknown country, and the 250-odd légionnaires commanded by Capt Barbier, along with a troop of cavalry, were escorting a party of cartographers, under overall command of Capt de Castries. The mounted section, of only some two dozen men, was led by Lt Massone. Early on the morning of 26 April, while passing through the valley in bad visibility due to a sand-storm, the strung-out column was suddenly attacked from high ground by a large force of Bou-Amama's warriors. Estimates of their strength vary wildly, but the most conservative published figure is 2,500, of whom nearly 1,000 were mounted.

For the next seven hours the little party fought off repeated charges, several of which reached hand-to-hand range. The mounted section, the main body of infantry, and the rearguard — mainly cavalry, with some légionnaires — were all pinned down separately. The main body managed to reach high ground and set up a perimeter, but there was little cover; the mounted section, crouching behind a parapet of dead mules, was almost wiped out. Barbier and Massone were both killed, and several of his men were killed trying to recover the captain's body. Others, cut off in the confused fighting, were staked out and tortured to death within sight of the defenders. An old légionnaire took command of the remains of the mounted section when his officer and NCOs were killed.

At last, apparently discouraged by their losses (unknown, but estimated at several hundred), the Arabs withdrew a little way, and the different groups of defenders were able to link up. The dead were hastily buried; then, with the wounded in the centre, the detachment began a slow retreat in hollow square formation, retracing their path towards Aïn-el-Khelil. They beat off several harassing attacks on the way, but these were not pressed home; the Arabs were busy looting the scattered baggage convoy. By nightfall the French reached the waterhole at Galloul, and there the relief column of 500 men, led by Col de Négrier in a night-long forced march from Aïn-el-Khelil, 50 kms (31 miles) away, found them at first light. Pressing on to the battlefield, they found their dead dug up and horribly mutilated. One account also mentions that hidden on the body of the old légionnaire who had rallied the mounted section they found an officer's cross of the *Légion d'honneur*: a splendidly romantic detail, firmly in keeping with the mythology of the Legion! Total casualties were 51 dead and 28 wounded.

A number of columns were sent scouring the desert for Bou-Amama, but without success. He slipped over the Moroccan border, and a period of relative calm followed. Columns and reconnaissances traversed the southern wilderness, and the mounted companies became firmly established. In July 1883, 5th and 6th Bns of the Legion were raised. In December 1884 the Legion was split into two Régiments Etrangers, each of four battalions of four companies plus a depot company each. Strong contingents were shipped to Indo-China, and later to other overseas theatres (see next chapter). The main Algerian bases were Sidi-bel-Abbès (1^{er} RE), Saïda (2^{e} RE), Géryville and Tiaret, with battalions regularly detached to other forts, mainly in the west. In November 1891 each regiment raised a 5th, and in December 1899 a 6th Bn.

The attention of the 19th Army Corps was turning more and more towards Morocco, and operations in Algeria were largely limited to a steady penetration of the Sahara, oasis by oasis. Occasional serious clashes took place, more often involving the garrisons left in these lonely posts, and supply convoys trying to reach them, than the initial penetration columns.

Since these new posts were far south in the true Sahara, regular re-supply was a matter of life and death; although placed at oases and palm-groves, the garrisons' control extended no further than rifle-range from their parapets, and they could be — and often were — shut up inside their walls by dissident tribes.

One of the most famous actions took place during a large-scale operation to relieve and supply the southern oases, particularly a besieged fort at Taghit, in August 1903. The convoy totalled some 3,000 pack camels and, therefore, had to march split into detachments; the waterholes along the track needed time to re-fill after each section passed through. The escort for one party of 572 camels was provided by Capt Vauchez and his half-company of the 22nd (Mounted) Coy, 2^{e} RE, totalling 113 men and two officers, with 30 Spahi troopers. The party had halted on the plain of El Moungar on the morning of 2 September 1903 when, at about 9.40 am, they were attacked by the first wave of several hundred hostiles. Vauchez managed to send riders in both directions to summon help before the Arabs closed in. For the next seven hours the mounted company fought an epic battle at enormous odds. There was little natural cover; eventually, after a series of courageous counter-attacks, they were forced to 'fort up' on a slight rise behind a parapet of dead mules. The subaltern, a popular Danish lieutenant named Selchauhansen, was killed almost at once. Vauchez was shot in the chest, but continued to direct the defence with energy. One by one the légionnaires were picked off; it was late afternoon before the Arabs' fire began to slacken, as they spotted the dust of the relief party approaching in the distance. At about 5.30 pm all firing died away, and shortly afterwards the mounted company of the 1^{er} RE arrived at the double. Vauchez lived to greet the rescuers, but died that evening. He was buried on the battlefield, with Selchauhansen and 34 of his men; 47 wounded survived.

The dissidents who nearly annihilated Vauchez's half-company, and the 4,000-odd tribesmen who besieged Taghit, came mainly from over the Moroccan border. It was decided that this no-man's-land of arid hills along the frontier must be cleaned up without delay. Col Lyautey, a brilliant officer who would later become legendary as French Resident-General in Morocco, was posted to take command of the Aïn Sefra sector. He lost no time in establishing a series of posts facing the frontier to the west, from which frequent expeditions sallied out to make life unpredictable for the Arabs. (One of the dissident leaders forced by Lyautey to abandon his base at Figuig and move over the border was the Legion's old enemy Bou-Amama.) From the forts at Béchar, Berguent and Forthassa the three mounted companies tirelessly harried the border marches; the Arabs, in their turn, were surprised in their camps, and driven westwards.

The tireless work of the Legion in the Sud-Oranais was finally marked, in April 1906, by the award of the *Légion d'honneur* to the colour of the 1^{er} RE at Sidi-bel-Abbès.

Morocco

The political background to France's intervention in Morocco, and her eventual occupation, is extremely complex. In the simplest terms, France was no longer prepared to tolerate the independence of this weak, corrupt and anarchic monarchy, whose unruly subjects raided over the Algerian border with impunity. For many years sultans of Morocco had managed to avoid occupation by skilled diplomacy, playing off against one another the ambitions and fears of the colonial powers; now there was a weak and foolish sultan on the throne, who was deeply in debt to France, and yet unable to satisfy her demands for the security of her Algerian frontier. Even strong and capable monarchs had never been able to establish a really effective central authority over the scores of feuding chiefs whose warriors infested the mountainous and almost trackess interior. Sultans ruled by subtlety rather than power — and the incumbent in 1907, Abd-el-Aziz, had neither.

Complex political manoeuvres, designed to reassure France's suspicious fellow-colonialists, accompanied the whole process of military intervention, and sometimes dictated its pace. Unlike Algeria — absorbed, on paper, as 'part of France' — Morocco would always enjoy the status of a protectorate, with nominal power vested in a succession of more or less puppet sultans, and actual power vested in a French Resident-General, backed by French bayonets. During the period 1907–14 several rival sultans came and went, but the fiction was maintained that France was responding to the appeals of the throne to protect Morocco from rebellious subjects. (The motive may have been wholly cynical, but the practice was genuinely beneficial; France made a start, at least, on pulling Morocco from the Middle Ages.)

As a reprisal for the murder of a Frenchman, troops including the III/1er RE* and that regiment's mounted company crossed the border and occupied Oujda in March 1907, without resistance. There they stayed. An advance on the inland capital of Fez would have been costly in men, money, time and prestige. The chaotic geography of the mountain ranges, which run mostly from south-west to north-east, and the rudimentary roads available, would make an advance from this direction against any kind of opposition a military nightmare.

Anti-European riots in the port of Casablanca on the west coast provided an excuse for the landing of an expedition there in August 1907, and the VI/1er RE took part. For the next 27 years, légionnaires would be engaged in more or less continual operations in Morocco.

Tribesmen poured down from the hills to ravage the coastal plain behind Casablanca; the French patrolled in force and skirmishes became frequent. On 3 September Cdt Provost, commanding the VI/1er, was killed. The next day reinforcements landed, included the I and IV/2e RE; the Legion now provided about half the western Moroccan expeditionary force. Meanwhile other units, mainly drawn from the 1er RE, moved up from Algerian bases to the Moulouya River in the east. There was fighting on the border, as the tribes who had used it as a refuge for so long reacted sharply to the new threat.

The western force slowly fanned out from Casablanca in 1907–08, fighting important actions at Taddert, Sidi Brahim, Mediouna, the Mellah River and M'Karto. By mid-1908 the western zone was fairly quiet, and the VI/1er and I/2e REs were shipped back to Algeria. On the Algerian/Moroccan border there was still plenty of fighting, particularly in the range of the Beni-Snassen. The French were taking firm possession of the right bank of the Moulouya, in preparation for an eventual advance westwards; and various elements of the II, V and VI/2e RE, and the two mounted companies of the 1er RE, all saw action. In a particularly desperate fight at Menabha on 16 April 1908, a company of the 2e RE and the 24th (Mounted) Coy, 1er RE distinguished themselves. A French camp was attacked and penetrated at dawn. A wild Legion bayonet charge averted disaster, but there were 120 casualties. The following month there was another serious clash at Beni-Ouzien, again involving the 24th (Mounted). These operations led to the French occupation, and holding against inevitable counter-attack, of the important border position of Bou-Denib.

During 1909–10 operations on both western and eastern fronts were generally of low intensity. In early 1911 there was serious trouble around Fez; whatever the truth of the matter, it gave an excuse for a French takeover of the capital. Gen Moinier sent columns east from Rabat on 7 May; one included a company from the I/2e RE, and the regiment's 3rd (Mounted) Coy, commanded by a certain Capt Rollet, whose fine reputation in the Moroccan fighting was only the start of a uniquely distinguished career. The column reached Fez on 21 May. The other companies of the battalion also saw action in this central zone in June and July 1911.

Meanwhile, on the eastern front, another Legion unit was adding to the corps' honour-roll of epic last stands. In preparation for the eventual advance from this direction, patrols were carrying out a thorough reconnaissance of the east bank of the Moulouya, listing routes which would be practicable for artillery, checking reports of hostile bands, and so forth. On 15 May 1911 Capt Labordette, with half of his 22nd Coy, VI/1^er RE had reached the end of his required reconnaissance. He could see a village, the *ksar* of Alouana, hidden at the bottom of a gorge; it had not been searched, and there were reports of hostiles using it as a base. Sending the bulk of his half-company off on their return march to camp, he pressed on with a section of just 35 légionnaires to check the village. They reached the bottom of the gorge, but were then ambushed in strength, and trapped. Labordette was killed, and several men were wounded. They were dragged into cover by their comrades, who surrounded them, faced outwards, and prepared to die hard. The trapped section fought off the Berbers for five endless hours; since some of the dead had knife-wounds, we know the range closed to hand-to-hand on at least one occasion. When the rest of the company finally managed to fight their way down the gorge at the head of the relief party, they found just six men still firing, all of them wounded; the other 29 were dead. Two of the dead were found to have removed and hidden the bolts of their Lebels as they lay dying, so that the tribesmen would not capture usable rifles.

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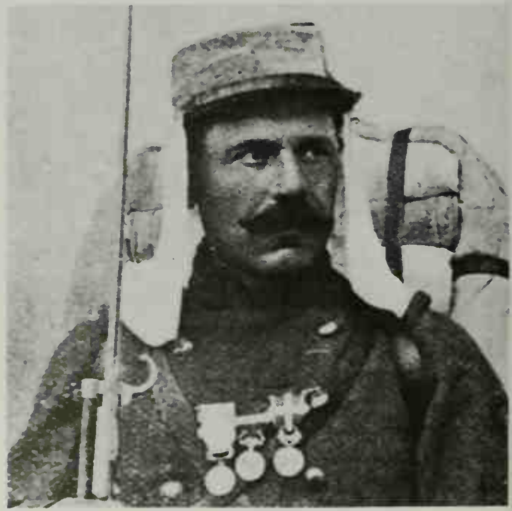
*III/1er RE = 3rd Bn, 1er Régiment Etranger. This form will be used from now on, since multiple regiments with multiple battalions were to become the permanent pattern of Legion organisation from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s.

In March 1912 the Treaty of Fez established a French protectorate over Morocco. This was the signal for an immediate revolt against the sultan and the French all over the country. Gen Lyautey was brought back from a Corps command in France to take charge as Resident-General. Hard fighting followed, on all fronts; at one point Lyautey's command post in Fez was under small-arms fire. While the I/1^er and VI/2^e REs fought numerous actions in the central zone, the other units of the 1^er RE advanced from the east as far as Guercif. The pacifying, and securing with blockhouses, of the central corridor from Rabat to Fez occupied 1913, while, at the same time, preparations were made for a final push from the east, jumping off from Guercif in a drive through the untamed mountains of the Tache de Taza towards the key town of that name. It was launched in May 1914, with elements of the Legion fighting both in the eastern column under Gen Baumgarten, and the western one, from Fez, under Gen Gouraud. Taza was reached from the east on 10 May, without too much hardship; the western column had much harder fighting, in which Lt Col Girodon of the 2^e RE was wounded during an action at 'the mountain of the Tsouls' — a hostile tribe. The two columns linked up on 16 May; two days later Lyautey reviewed his troops at Taza, with the *régiment de marche* of the 1^er RE taking a prominent part.

While a tenuous corridor had thus been established between the Atlantic ports, the capital, Taza, and the Algerian frontier, it was not a foregone conclusion that it could be maintained. There was a hasty building of blockhouses and supply roads; and they were needed, for the reaction of the tribes was fierce. Battles continued along the flanks of the corridor without pause. At Sidi-bel-Kacem on 4 June the popular Cdt Met led his I/1^er RE up a rocky slope into the attack, to the tune of the battalion march, 'Carolina', played on bugles and fifes. He was badly wounded, subsequently losing his leg. (His entire battalion petitioned higher command for his promotion; the hero of Madagascar got his lieutenant-colonelcy, but history does not record whether this unorthodox approach was responsible!) Further south, the VI/2^e RE fought their way into Khenifra in the Middle Atlas — a post which was to be under almost constant siege for four years thereafter.

The outbreak of World War I found the Legion in Morocco with a *régiment de marche* of the 1^er RE (I, II and VI/1^e, with two mounted companies) and another drawn from the 2^e RE (III and VI/2^e, with one mounted company).



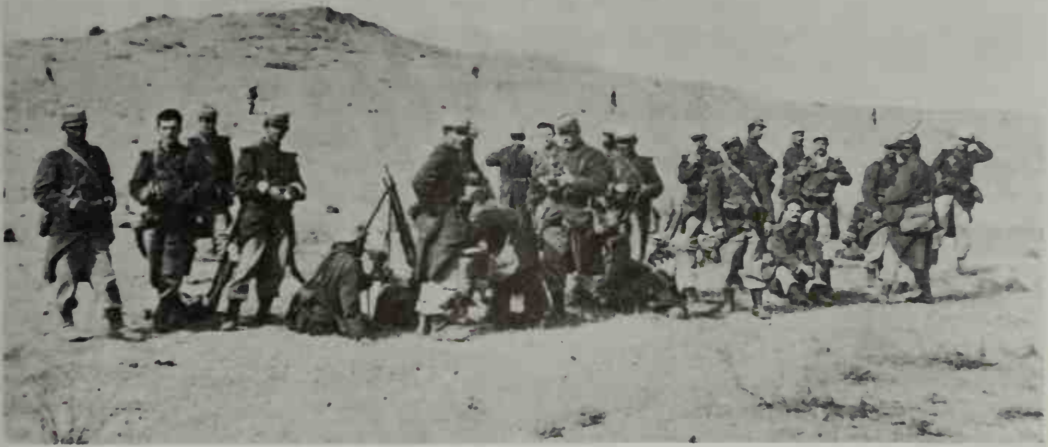
A veteran of the 1^er RE, 1913, wearing a khaki *képi*-cover with attached white neck-flap

Uniforms, North Africa 1872-1914

Regulations of 24 July 1872 quoted by Morel, attributed to the *Journal Moniteur Officiel 1872, number 46, page 95*, give enlisted men's tunics a crimson collar, but no other crimson features: i.e the 1867 tunic, after application of the order of October 1871 removing piping. Morel lists dark blue grenades as collar insignia, but Galot & Robert state that no insignia were in fact worn. Morel describes the *képi* in slightly ambiguous terms, but his meaning is clearly that *no later than* the introduction of a new rounded-peak *képi* by an order of December 1873, and possibly between July 1872 and the introduction of the new *képi*, the cap badge was changed to a red seven-flamed grenade. All editions of *Livre d'Or* give 1881 as the date of the change from red star to red grenade. Guyader says 1875, and Milassin 1874 — both being consistent with a change of badge coinciding with gradual issue of the new round-peaked *képi*. Interestingly, Galot & Robert give the badge as a brass star, until changed for the red grenade in 1875.

The crimson trousers were unchanged. The dark blue nine-button *veste*, with conventional forearm ranking, remained the normal barracks dress for privates and corporals; Morel gives it — and the *capote* — red cut-out grenade collar ornaments from 1872, but Galot & Robert deny their use, and are partly supported by Guyader. The grey-blue *capote* still had a two-button cuff, two rows of six front buttons, and the usual arrangement of rear buttons (see drawing p. 74). It was the normal campaign dress of all ranks below *adjudant*, with crimson or white trousers and white half-gaiters.

On 5 March 1872, sergeant-majors lost their rifles in favour of the 1845 *adjudant's* sabre, and were authorised a revolver the following year. Other ranks carried the Chassepot until the late 1870s, when it was replaced by the 1874 Gras. This was simply an improved Chassepot, firing 11mm metal cartridges, which were still loaded singly by bolt action. It seems that the 1866 brass-hilted sabre bayonet was kept in use for some years after the issue of the Gras, but by the early 1880s we see the wooden-gripped épee bayonet usually associated with the Gras coming into use. The old 1845 *giberne* was worn on the back of the belt, certainly until the early 1880s, together with the 1869 *poche* on the front right. A new *bidon* appeared from 1872–73: of two-litre capacity for troops in Africa, it was of the two-spout shape familiar right up to



A rare photograph of a Legion platoon on campaign, Morocco, *circa* 1912. The blue-grey *capote* appears to be worn with the khaki Colonial uniform introduced in 1909–10, and khaki *képi*-covers the late years of the 1940s.

The white *képi* cover, made in one or two pieces, was now standard for campaign and fatigue dress; the neck-flap, if attached but not required, as on fatigues around a fort, was tucked out of sight under the back of the cover. The cover was always removed for *grande tenue*; it was not an official part of the uniform, merely an expedient. Despite some odd illustrations which have appeared elsewhere, at this period it was unknown for any kind of insignia to be marked or worn on the front of the white cover. It fitted to the *képi* by small buttonholes each side, engaging with the chinstrap buttons; a tightening tape was often hemmed into the lower edge, and the leather chinstrap was worn over the cover.

The 1872 regulations describe the officers' tunic as being the same as that of the troops, with a crimson collar; Galot & Robert, and other sources, state that in the Legion the officers' collar was of ground colour — i.e., in practice, black. They also disagree with Morel's note that a gold collar grenade was worn at this date. The 'number one' tunic, worn with epaulettes and, when appropriate, a gorget, had ranking in flat braid rings round the cuffs. Morel says that a 'number two' tunic was tolerated for *petite tenue*, of the same cut, but with ranking in Hungarian knots on the sleeves, and always worn open over a waistcoat, without epaulettes or gorget. At this date the ranking followed the sequence in the table below.

This is perhaps a convenient point to re-cap on the question of officers' *képi* lace. For all ranks this appeared in the same places on the cap. There was a quatrefoil knot of lace on the slightly sunken top surface and a ring of lace round the edge of this top surface. At front, back and each side lengths of lace passed vertically down the crimson crown of the cap, linking this top ring with a series of rings which passed horizontally round the cap at the point where the crown met the blue-black band. The top ring was always single; the other lacing varied in the number of thicknesses and rings according to rank. All lace was gold, except in those cases specifically indicated in the table appearing on the opposite page.

Ranks	*Cuff rings*	*Epaulettes*
Colonel	Five gold	Two gold, short thick fringes
Lt Colonel	Gold/silver/gold/silver/gold	As colonel, but top surfaces silver, crescents and fringes gold.
Chef de Bn	Four gold	Gold, fringed, on left; fringeless on right.
Commandant-major:		
1871–83	One silver over three gold	As chef de bataillon
1893	One silver over three gold	Gold, fringed, on right; fringeless on left.
Capitaine	Three gold	Two gold, long thin fringes
*Capitaine Adjudant-major	Silver/gold/silver	As capitaine, but red stripe down centre of top surfaces.
*Capitaine de tir	Silver/gold/gold	As capitaine, but top surfaces silver, crescents and fringes gold.
Lieutenant	Two gold	Gold, fringed, on left; fringeless on right.
Sous-lieutenant	One gold	Gold, fringed, on right; fringeless on left.
†Adjudant-chef	One gold, with red central 'light'	As sous-lieutenant, in gold, with red stripe down centre of top surfaces.
Adjudant	One silver, with red central 'light'	As sous-lieutenant, but silver, with red stripe down centre of top surfaces.

*These grades were abolished in 1890, their insignia thus disappearing during the ten years when Legion officers wore the dolman without epaulettes — see later passage in this chapter.
†This rank was introduced in 1913 only.

Rank	*Verticals & quatrefoil*	*Horizontal rings*
Colonel	Triple	Five gold
Lt Colonel	Triple	Gold/silver/gold/silver/gold
Majors	Triple	Four gold
Capitaines	Double	Three gold
Lieutenant	Single	Two gold
Sous-lieutenant	Single	One gold
Adjudant-chef, from 1913 only:	Single, of mixed gold and red	One, of mixed gold and red
Adjudant	Single, of mixed gold and red	One silver

The bottom rank ring was always butted down against the edge of the blue-black band, with subsequent higher rings at 1mm intervals, the crimson of the crown showing between them. The verticals normally showed in the intervals between the horizontal rings at this period.

The officers' *capote-manteau* was dark blue, with two rows of five buttons, a deep fall collar and ranking in the form of cuff rings; again, Morel gives it gold collar grenades. An alternative in dirty weather was a *pélerine*, a full-cut storm coat of black proofed cloth. Single-breasted, it had four uniform buttons centrally set on bars of black material across the chest, pointed at each end, and pointed tabs buttoning the cuff closed. In each side seam there were vertical pockets with flaps cut *en accolade*, and a central button. There was a high stand-and-fall collar, and outside it a generously-cut hood was permanently attached. It was worn without ranking.

Morel gives the officer's *képi* a gold grenade from 1872; Galot and Robert say a gold star until 1875. The gold-laced parade belt had now lapsed, and the black type was worn with all dress orders. The 1855 sabre was still used; a regulation revolver appeared in 1874 — prior to this officers had provided their own, of various types. In the same year infantry officers were allowed breeches and top-boots when mounted.

From 1874 sergeants and sergeant-majors were authorised a gold lace false chinstrap on the *képi*, as worn by officers and *adjudants* since the 1850s. This was worn permanently fixed in the 'up' position, and a second, black leather strap was provided to actually keep the cap on the head; this was attached *inside* the cap, and when not in use was pushed up into the interior behind the peak. In the same year sergeant-majors were given a special *capote*, of dark blue, with a fall collar, two rows of five buttons, and four pockets with rectangular flaps but no visible buttons. (Presumably this bore crimson regimental numbers on the collar after 1884, and perhaps crimson grenades before that date, if Morel is correct. It was supressed in 1887.)

In May 1879, white linen fatigue trousers were ordered for the Army as a whole. The Legion had been wearing its own equivalent for generations, of course, but from 1879 the crimson trousers were increasingly relegated to winter wear solely for parades and walking-out dress. In September 1880, officers were also authorised to wear trousers of white drill material when appropriate. In that same year they finally lost the gorget. In 1881 the troops' use of epaulettes was forbidden on operations; they would now be reserved for garrison duties only, being replaced on the *capote* by rolled blue-grey shoulderstraps.

In 1881 a famous piece of improvisation appeared — the cartridge pouch 'de Négrier', later called simply, 'de la Légion'. In the course of operations in the wastes of South Oran Province, Col de Négrier, commanding the Régiment Etranger, ordered his men to make themselves an extra chest pouch, so that plentiful cartridges could be carried handily, with easy access even if firing from the prone position or on the move; until then, all ammunition apart from the immediate-use cartridges in the belt pouches was carried in the pack. It is not entirely clear if the pouch was de Négrier's own idea, or if he saw one improvised by an ingenious soldier and ordered the rest to copy it. At all events, he was certainly its sponsor, and when he commanded a brigade in Tonkin in 1885 he ordered his whole command to provide themselves with it. It was simply a long, narrow pocket of cloth or thin leather (often of several stitched layers of white linen, but also observed in coat cloth, or even trouser cloth) slung across the chest on a buckled strap around the body and a second round the neck; the straps were usually made from trouser braces. A number of buttons — of metal, wood, china, or whatever the légionnaire could scrounge — closed the flap. The pouch held twelve or fourteen packets of cartridges. It was widely used by Legion units on campaign in Africa and the Far East until about 1895 — see Plate 8, fig. 26, and plate 9.

In 1881 the white spatterdash gaiter was ordered out of campaign use in the French Army, a smaller type being reserved for use under the crimson trousers for parades; the order seems to have been largely ignored in the Legion until the 1890s.

In 1882 the blue sash became an item of official uniform in the Legion; it had been worn on campaign for years, but now it was authorised for use over the *capote*, *veste* and *bourgeron* (see below), though never over the tunic. The same year saw the arrival of a new knapsack, model 1879, very similar in outward appearance to the previous type but in proofed black cloth with leather edging, rather than calfskin. It was in about this year, too, that the 1877 cartridge pouches normally associated with the Gras rifle began to replace the old 1845 and 1869 pouches on a large scale. Known to the troops as 'coffins', these 1877 pouches had a wooden inner box covered with black leather; the 'lid' was arched, like a little chest, and it fastened by straps and buttons on the end surfaces. Two were normally worn, on the front of the belt.

A garment closely associated with the Legion's 'public image' was authorised in May 1882, although it probably took some time to become universal issue. This was the white fatigue *bourgeron* or blouse, worn with the white trousers and sash. It is illustrated and described in detail elsewhere — see Plate 11, fig. 36. In hot weather it replaced the shirt and *veste*, and was worn under the greatcoat on campaign. It was a remarkably long-lived item, and survived until the late 1930s in some units. It was used for campaign dress, fatigues, drill order — and even, on occasion, for parades. Ranking was attached to it by means of a buttoned chest-tab.

A major set of regulations dated 15 March 1883 describes alterations mainly to officers' uniform. They confirm the troops' uniforms of 1872, with the successive modifications; but officers and *adjudants* were now to present an entirely different appearance from their men. Their tunics disappeared, replaced by a *dolman à brandenbourgs*. This was a single-breasted jacket of (in practice) black cloth, with seven black silk/mohair 'frogs' across the chest. The edges were lined with mohair braid, which also outlined the pointed cuff, two side vents, and a *Soubise* pattern on the rear. In the Legion, against regulations, the dolman was entirely black, collar included; this latter bore the gold grenades. Ranking was in large Hungarian knots on the sleeves. Epaulettes were replaced by thick trefoil shoulder-knots buttoned in place: gold for *grande tenue*, black mohair for *petite tenue*. *Adjudants* had a single black mohair Hungarian knot on the sleeve; they wore the black shoulder-knot with *grande tenue*, and none with *petite tenue*. See Plate 10, fig. 32.

At the same time officers acquired 50mm black silk stripes on the outside legs of their trousers, and *adjudants*, black piping. A new officer's sword appeared in the same year, and was worn on a single suspender from an internal belt; *adjudants* kept the 1845 sabre, but acquired a slightly smarter version for walking-out.

In 1882–83 the *képis* of officers and *adjudants* acquired a second chinstrap. This was bordered with gold lace, as were its two small slides; for *adjudants* the border was silver with a red 'light'. The strap was worn down, under the chin, to signify that the wearer was on duty — in that respect it replaced the old gorget. Off duty it was supposed to be worn up, at all times; in practice most people preferred to leave it off, so as not to hide their gold false chinstrap.

In December 1884 the formation of the 1er and 2^{e} REs led to the addition of regimental numbers to the 'bombs' of officers' and warrant officers' collar grenades, though not to that on the *képi*. The troops acquired numbers on their collars — blue on tunics, red on *vestes* and *capotes*. In February 1885 epaulettes were supressed throughout the Army, the order being rescinded in January 1887. It seems that the Legion may have ignored this order; but from 1886 they wore the red and green epaulettes only for major parades and reviews. In 1885 a new pattern of boots was issued.

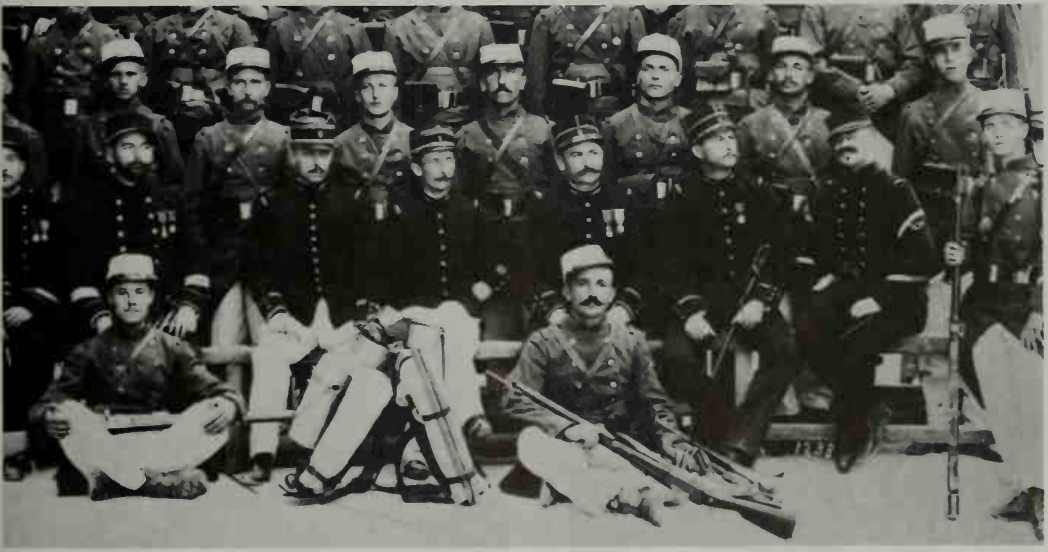
The Legion did not receive the '*képi pompon*' of 1886, but continued to wear the old pattern. From June 1886, officers and *adjudants* were authorised to wear in the field a jacket of grey-blue coat cloth (from 1891, dark blue) with a standing collar sometimes embellished with the Legion's gold grenade. It had four pockets with rectangular flaps but concealed buttons, and an integral cloth belt. The front buttons were covered with cloth, and were in any case concealed by a fly. Ranking was shown by cuff rings. This *vareuse* was not very popular, and the 'number two' tunic was usually preferred.

In October 1887 a new *tenue de ville* was authorised for re-enlisted NCOs of infantry, including the Legion. Of fine black cloth, the tunic was basically of standard pattern, but the regimental numbers on the collar were gold; this also applied to the *capote*. The *képi* grenade was to be gold also, although photos suggest that this order was by no means always followed. The crescents of the epaulettes were to be of red and gold thread, alternating. A new épee sword was provided. (In 1910 and 1912 this *tenue de ville* ceased, progressively, to be strictly a walking-out dress and was extended to all other occasions on which the tunic was normally worn.)

In 1887 the troops' *veste* was ordered replaced by a *bourgeron* of grey-blue coat cloth (see Plate 10, fig. 34). This was generally similar to the *veste* in outline, but had only two uniform buttons, and ranking was worn on chest-tabs.

The question of re-enlistment chevrons, worn up to at least 1887 (in red and gold by troops and NCOs respectively) on the left upper arm, is fraught with contradiction. Galot and Robert say that an Army order of that year supressed them altogether; they were replaced by a line of piping round the top of the tunic and *capote* cuff, red for the troops and mixed red and gold for NCOs. The *Livre d'Or (3)* says that the chevrons were not worn 'after 1904'. Yet photos indisputably show the chevrons still worn by légionnaires at least as late as 1908, alongside NCOs wearing the cuff piping; and some photos seem to show troops wearing the red chevrons *and* the red cuff piping.

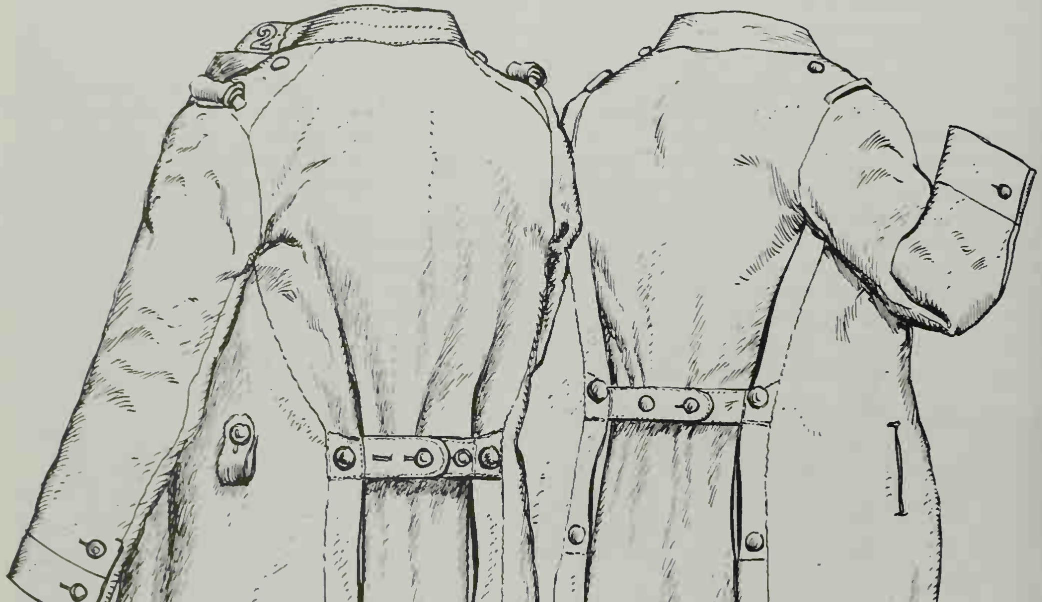
Regulations of 7 February 1893 made no changes in the uniforms of the troops, beyond incorporating the various minor modifications listed above, from those of 1872. For officers and warrant officers, however, there was a major change: the dolman was abolished, and in its place a new 'dark blue' (black) tunic was authorised. This had a stand collar, which bore the gold grenades, seven uniform buttons in a single row down the front and three-pointed cuff patches with three small uniform buttons (see Plate 13, fig. 42). There was no piping, and in the Legion the collar and the cuff patches were in ground colour — i.e. black — rather than the crimson worn in the Line.



Superb group photograph of officers and men of the 1^{er} RE, probably around 1910. The enlisted men wear the *capote* with single cuff button, introduced in the late 1890s, white *képi*-covers and trousers, and blue sashes. The bugler seated centre front has a broad line of tricolour lace all round his collar, centred on its depth, and butting up to the outer edges of the *écussons*. The seated NCOs and officers are, from left to right: a *sergent-major;* a *lieutenant;* a *capitaine;* two *adjudants;* and a *sergent-fourrier*. The NCOs wear old 1872 tunics; the *adjudants* and the *capitaine*, seven-button 1893 tunics, and the *lieutenant*, a nine-button 1910 tunic. Note the very different 'sit' of the *adjudants*' and officers' *képis*. (BBC Hulton Picture Library)

Epaulettes and *brides* reappeared, in the sequence listed earlier. Rank was also indicated by gold and silver braid cuff rings; again, see earlier in this chapter for details. Company officers placed the rings so that the top edge of the third, captain's ring was level with the top edge of the cuff patch; the subsequent rings of field officers were above the patch. 'Number two' tunics sometimes had breast pockets, and were worn in the field.

A new knapsack appeared in 1893, not significantly different from the previous model when seen fastened and stowed. It was in the mid-1890s that the Gras single-shot rifle was progressively replaced by the new 8mm Lebel magazine rifle. In Algeria its issue seems to have slightly anticipated that of the pouches and Y-straps normally associ-



Rear details of the *capote* of 1872 (left), and the slightly different version which replaced it from *circa* 1897. (G. A. Embleton) ated with it. These were generally issued in 1898–1900. The 1888 model pouch was rather similar to that of 1869: a black leather item with 'gusset' or 'bellows' side surfaces, fastened by a strap and a brass stud centrally at the front. Three were worn on the belt, by loops and by rear rings which engaged the hooks of the *contre-sanglons* of the pack, or those of the model 1892 Y-straps. With the general issue of the latter, the légionnaire at last had decent support for the weight of the belt, pouches and bayonet when not wearing the knapsack. The Lebel bayonet was a cruciform-section 'needle' with a twenty-inch blade and a smooth grip of German silver. It was carried in the same type of branched frog as the Gras bayonet, in a black-painted sheath.

In 1897 new buttoned anklets of old coat-cloth came into use — see Plate 10, fig. 34. In December that year there was an order for the experimental issue of a *bonnet de police* in grey-blue coat-cloth as a barracks and fatigue cap, alongside the *képi*. This was of the familiar 'sidecap' shape, with a curved turn-up at the sides. Its use was confirmed in further orders of 1905 and 1910, and its issue to the Legion is confirmed by photos taken in Morocco in the early years of the century. In 1899 the old dark blue *veste* reappeared, in place of the grey-blue *bourgeron* of 1887. Between 1897 and 1900 the *capote* was progressively replaced by a new model which differed visibly in having a single cuff button, and no rear vent. From 1897 the *képi* neck-flap was ordered to be light khaki.

From about 1895 officers began to wear in the field a khaki *vareuse* or field-jacket instead of their 'number two' tunic This item appeared in a number of slightly differing patterns, in a light sand-khaki cloth; it is discussed in the commentary to Plate 12, fig. 39. From about 1897 officers and *adjudants* also began to wear a white *vareuse,* after a Colonial Infantry model, when their men were in the white *bourgeron* and fatigue trousers; see Plate 11, fig. 35. In the same year NCOs, both junior and senior, were authorised to wear as barracks and walking- out dress a single-breasted white jacket — again, to match the white blouse uniform of the troops. This had a low stand collar, six uniform buttons down the front, and concealed pockets; rank stripes were worn on the sleeve in the normal manner. The blue sash was not worn over this jacket; and at this stage it does not seem that collar patches were worn on it. Its use was not universal; photos still show sergeants wearing the dark blue tunic while the troops are in 'whites', or in *veste* and white trousers. Even in the mounted companies, where practical comfort in the field was the priority, we see senior NCOs wearing the dark blue tunic on some occasions, although 'whites' and the *capote* were the norm.

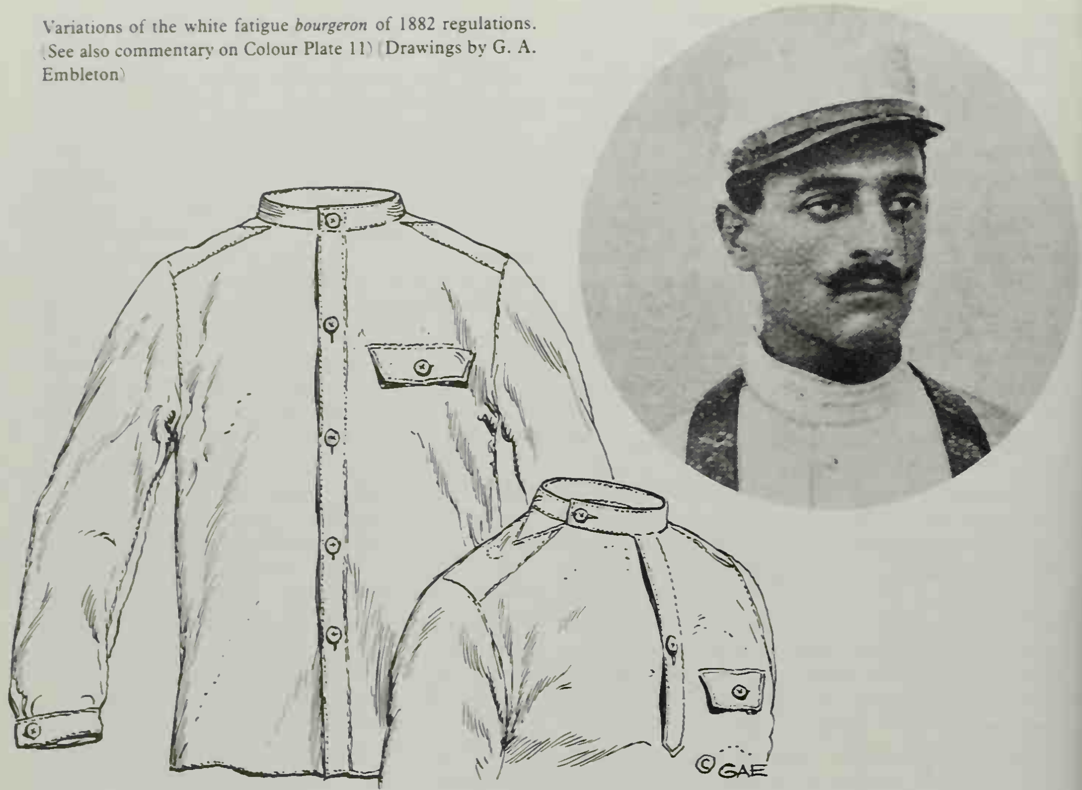
Regulations of 8 March 1899 introduced a new model of this dark blue tunic for the troops, very similar to that of the officers' 1893 pattern. It had a single row of seven buttons, a crimson stand collar bearing crimson patches with dark blue regimental numbers, and three-point, three-button cuff patches of crimson (see Plate 13, fig. 41). There was no piping. The rear was cut *à la Soubise,* with three uniform buttons on each patch. The use of epaulettes, ranking, etc was unchanged. (It should be mentioned that in some cases the old double-breasted tunic was photographed still in use as late as World War I.)The troops only wore this tunic for parade duty and sometimes for walking-out when in garrison, normally with the crimson trousers but occasionally with the white. It was always worn with the leather belt and bayonet.

In about 1900 the colonial helmet, long worn overseas (see next chapter) was first distributed to Legion infantry and mounted companies operating in the arid wastes of South Oran Province. Two models were in use simultaneously. The 1878, made of white material, was joined in approximately 1905 by the 1890 model, which had a slightly smaller outline and less pronounced brims at front and back. Although the later model was manufactured in light khaki, both models were worn in the field with loosely-made khaki covers draw-stringed in place, sometimes with the helmet's top ventilator protruding from a hole. The helmets were unpopular, and their use was patchy; the *képi*, with its cover of white, or pale khaki washed out to a variety of shades, or bleached deliberately with *eau de javel,* was still much in evidence.

In about 1903 the cloth anklets were generally replaced with the model 1900 black leather anklet, which laced down the front (Plate 11, fig. 36), although odd survivals of even the old white spatterdash were still to be seen years later (Plate 11, fig. 37), and the trousers were often allowed to fall loose to the ankle, or roughly bloused over the boots (Plate 12, fig. 38).

In about 1910 officers and *adjudants* were authorised to wear in the field black leather leggings, buttoning up the side. In fact they seem to have worn a variety of privately purchased leggings for years beforehand. In 1910 officer's dark blue tunics received nine front buttons.

The units first committed to Morocco in 1907



Variations of the white fatigue *bourgeron* of 1882 regulations. (See also commentary on Colour Plate 11) (Drawings by G. A. Embleton)

wore their normal Algerian field dress: whites, *capotes*, and covered *képis*. But in 1909–10 reinforcements from Oran began to appear in Morocco in a new combat dress — the 1903 Colonial uniform, worn for some years in the overseas colonies, consisting of a jacket and trousers of light khaki cloth. The colour varied from yellowish to pinkish-brown, and the details of cut also varied. Generally, the jacket had six uniform buttons down the front, a square-cut stand collar, plain cuffs, two skirt pockets with horizontal rectangular flaps with hidden buttons, internal breast pockets, a central rear vent, a belt loop on the left, and plain shoulderstraps. Different batches had five or seven buttons, flapless pockets, and so forth. The trousers worn with this jacket were of the same khaki, plain and straight. They were worn either hanging loose over the boot, or bloused, or tucked into the leather anklet.

In the field the jacket was worn with the collar opened and folded down; for more formal duties it was hooked closed, and a small, square crimson patch with a dark blue regimental number and with the outer edge cut *en accolade* could be hooked to thread loops as required (see Plate 12, fig. 40). The blue sash was not worn over the khaki jacket. In the field the khaki uniform was usually worn with the colonial helmet in a khaki cover, the leather equipment of 1888–1892, and either the knapsack with the blue *capote*, or two *musettes*. The khaki jacket was often photographed worn with the white fatigue trousers and the covered kepi.

The khaki outfit gradually took pride of place from the classic blue-and-white as the infantry field dress during the Moroccan penetration, and by the outbreak of World War I was in general use. The mounted companies seem to have stayed *en blanc* longer than the infantry, and the old white fatigue and field dress was never wholly replaced by khaki. In Morocco the blue tunic and crimson trousers were not generally worn at this date; for parades and walking-out a white uniform was issued, virtually identical to the khaki one in cut, but without shoulder straps. This was the 1897 Colonial Infantry uniform, of which the jacket had already been seen as the NCO's alternative to the white blouse — see above. (The old 'Marine' troops were in fact re-titled 'Colonial' in 1900).

5

Tonkin, Dahomey and Madagascar

On 8 November 1883 the Legion's 1st Bn disembarked at Haiphong, 600 strong, led by Commandant Donnier. They would quickly establish two significant traditions: first, that a battalion or two of légionnaires as an ever-reliable 'heavy brigade' would be a normal, even indispensable part of all French colonial expeditions from now on; and secondly, that the Legion would continue to provide a large force for garrisons in Indo-China, forging a connection with that region almost as strong as that enjoyed with Algeria.

The political background has no place here. In the briefest terms, the French penetration of Indo-China was by means of a client kingdom, Annam (roughly, modern Vietnam). Annam ceded to France a protectorate over Tonkin, the rugged northern province which she claimed to rule. Annam had only relatively recently shrugged off the suzerainty of Imperial China, her traditional enemy, and the formidable Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi sponsored an army of some 25,000 Chinese troops and local irregulars, the 'Black Flags', who ravaged Tonkin. A treaty of August 1883 confirmed the protectorate, and an expeditionary force was sent in to clear out the 'Black Flags'.

These partly Yunnanese troops, partly local marauders were brave and resourceful jungle fighters, but operated in badly co-ordinated warbands; they had a fair proportion of modern small-arms, and some old cannon, and occupied two main centres at Son Tay and Bac Ninh. The Legion battalion joined the force of some 5,000 Marine infantry, Tirailleurs and Line infantry which assembled under Admiral Courbet at Hanoi. On 16 December the battalion took part in the assault on Son Tay, a brick-built Chinese fort some 48 kms (30 miles) from Hanoi on the Clear River; penetrating the west gate, which was screened by palisades and secondary walls, a six-foot Belgian légionnaire named Minnaërt led the way through the breach (accompanied, according to one report, by his officer, Lt Macquart).

On 24 February 1884 the Legion's 2nd Bn (Cdt Hutin) arrived at Haiphong and joined the 1st in time for the march on Bac Ninh by General de Négrier's column. Both took part in the capture of that position, which involved stiff fighting for a line of fortified villages before the main fort was reached. The battalions then parted; the 1st Bn, supported by gunboats, took the 'Black Flag' fort at Tuyen Quang on 1 June, leaving its 3rd and 4th Companies as part of the garrison. The 2nd Bn occupied Hung Hoa, and both battalions carried out exhausting and costly patrolling. Two months later the enemy boomed the Clear River, cutting off Tuyen Quang; the garrison, weakened by disease, was relieved by the 1st and 2nd Companies of the 1st Bn, and its stores were replenished — but as soon as the relief column had left, the fort was once more cut off by infiltrating enemy bands.

Following the splitting of the Legion into two Régiments Etrangers by the decree of 14 December 1884, the old 1st and 2nd Bns of the Foreign Legion were redesignated I/1er RE and II/1er RE. The 3rd and 4th Bns were already at sea; they were redesignated III/2^{e} RE and IV/2^{e} RE. The former disembarked in Tonkin on 12 January 1885; the latter was diverted to Formosa, fighting a sharp little campaign there before joining the others in Tonkin in June.

Early in 1885 all eyes were on the isolated garrison of Tuyen Quang, who were besieged by an army of 20,000 'Black Flags' and Chinese regulars, and who held out against repeated assaults, bombardment, and energetic sapping and mining from 23 January to 3 March. Commanded by Cdt Dominé of the 2^{e} Bn d'Afrique, the légionnaires, Marine artillerymen, Tonkinese Tirailleurs, engineers, and sailors from the gunboat *La Mitrailleuse* put up an epic defence. The fort was a square, 275m (300 yards) on a side, and the 600-man garrison was stretched very thinly along this perimeter. Mines brought down about 110m (120 yards) of the walls in six major breaches, which were held and barricaded against mass infantry attacks by small parties of defenders in repeated and desperate hand-to-hand fighting. By the time a relief column lifted the siege the Legion companies had lost 32 dead, including one company commander; their 126 wounded included all the other officers. The surviving commander of the 2nd Company, Capt de Borelli, later wrote a poem, *To My Dead*, which remains one of the most famous tributes to the légionnaire; it is dedicated to one Thiebald Streibler, who gave his life to save his officer during a sortie on the last night of the siege.

The II/1er RE and III/2e RE served in de Négrier's 2nd Brigade in the northward drive to Lang Son and the Chinese frontier in February 1885. A massive counter-attack pushed the force back to Lang Son, the Legion battalions forming the hard-pressed rearguard. Heavy fighting at Ki Lua, during which de Négrier was badly wounded, led to a retreat to Chu in the last days of March. Major hostilities ceased with the signature of an armistice between France and China in April; but despite the Peace of Tien Tsin the Legion continued to be heavily committed to pacification and 'mopping up', as local war-bands and pirates remained active for decades, and major punitive columns had to be mounted at intervals right up to about 1918.

The units were split between various garrisons, often in one-company posts. The I/1er RE was dispersed around Ha Giang and the upper Clear River; it was shipped back to Algeria in October 1897. The II/1er RE occupied the Cao Bang – Lang Son area. The III/2e RE was spread along the middle and lower Clear River, headquarters being established at Tuyen Quang. The IV/2e RE were dispersed around Lao Kay and Yen Bay on the upper reaches of the Red River. These three autonomous units remained the standing Legion garrison in Indo-China. In 1900–01 two other battalions were shipped in to take the strain when Marine infantry units were temporarily withdrawn for the international force which put down the Chinese Boxers.

A number of transfers and changes of title confused the picture further. In 1903 the IV/2e RE was redesignated IV/1er RE, and the V/2e RE came out from Algeria. In 1905 the II/1er RE and V/2e RE simply exchanged titles, for administrative reasons, the men remaining in the same posts. In late 1907 the III/2e RE was disbanded, leaving the garrison as three battalions once more — the II/1er RE around Tuyen Quang, the IV/1er RE around Vietri, Yen Bay and Lao Kay, and the V/2e RE around Lang Son and Cao Bang. The II/1er RE returned to Africa in 1908.

Dahomey

Dahomey is a pestilential strip of swamp-jungle leading northwards from West Africa's 'Slave Coast', bordered by Togo, Upper Volta, Niger and Nigeria; it is currently known as Benin. In 1892 France sent an expeditionary column to depose its king, Behanzin, an unattractive monarch much given to mass human sacrifice and slaving, the immediate excuse being his threats against the French trading post at Porto Novo. A *bataillon de marche* of the Legion under Cdt Faurax was included in the 4,000-strong column led by Col Dodds; it landed at Cotonou on 26 August 1892, and the column set off northwards on the banks of the Ouémé River four days later. The objective was Behanzin's capital, Abomey, some 105kms (65 miles) up country through dense jungle and swamps; it took the column more than two months to cover this distance. Throughout the march they were harrassed by hit-and-run attacks. Behanzin could put at least 10,000 warriors into the field, most of them primitively armed and not particularly formidable in open combat, but well able to inflict a constant trickle of casualties on the labouring column in a series of ambushes. He also had one 'secret weapon' which disconcerted the légionnaires considerably.

Led by a party of natives to hack a path through the jungle, the column made its weary way north, pitching a square, entrenched camp each night. At Dogba on 19 September they suffered a major dawn attack lasting two hours; the square was penetrated, and the bayonet charge which cleared it cost the life of Cdt Faurax. Total casualties were 45 dead and 60 wounded, and some 800 Dahomeyan corpses were counted after the battle. Among them were numbers of warriors from Behanzin's best unit — a regiment of women, quickly dubbed 'Amazons' by the Europeans, who apparently fought with great determination, armed not only with native spears and *coupe-coupes* but also with a fair number of modern repeating rifles. The momentary hesitation of even a hardened légionnaire when faced by a half-naked girl wielding a *coupe-coupe* must have cost a number of lives.

The miserable advance crawled on, attacked from thick cover at every opportunity but seldom able to get a clear sight of their tormentors or to bring their firepower to bear. A particularly ugly little action at Poguessa on 4 October cost the life of Sous-lt Amelot of the 2e RE; and for the next ten days the constant ambushes sprung on the main column and its struggling supply and water parties continued to take a steady toll, including five more Legion officers wounded. The plight of wounded and sick men, who had to be carried back down the sinister jungle tracks with small escorts, was pitiable. On 15 October Col Dodds halted to allow his strung-out column to assemble and to replenish supplies, including scarce drinking water; on the 25th he pressed on for the final approach to the capital. The column fought its way into the village of Kana, and on 17 November they reached Abomey at last. The skull-decked huts of the king were empty and the town was in flames; Behanzin had abandoned his capital, but was finally captured months later.

Five months after leaving the coast, the Legion battalion returned; of 800 men some 450 effectives had survived death, wounds and disease. Dodds paid glowing tribute to the part played by the légionnaires throughout the campaign. The *bataillon de marche* returned to Algeria in February 1894, and was dispersed in March.

* * *

In the 1890s small units of the Legion played a part in France's ceaseless efforts to stamp out slave-trading in the huge and trackless wastes of northwest Africa — roughly, modern Mali and Niger, and including parts of Mauritania, Senegal and Upper Volta. The responsible officer, Lt-Col Archinard, was plagued by two powerful slaver-kings, Samory of Bissandougou and Ahmadou of Segou. His forces were over-stretched; and in summer 1892 he specifically requested a detachment of the Legion, as being the only European troops capable of operating effectively in the murderous climate and terrain. In September a picked force of 120 men led by Capt Destenave of the 2^{e} RE arrived by barge at Kayes on the Senegal River, where they were issued mules and formed into a Mounted Company. Until May 1893 they operated under Archinard with notable success; they covered huge distances under the harshest conditions, clashed with the slaving bands on many occasions, and successfully pacified a large tract of country.

In February 1894, during the crisis following the massacre of a party led by one Col Bonnier at Tombouctou, two further companies were formed and sent to Kayes and later to Segou, under Cdt Bouvier. Operating in the area until January 1895, they saw a good deal of action. One small force of 90 légionnaires, 200 Senegalese and two 80mm guns were sent to recapture the fortified village of Bossé, held by well over a thousand hostiles led by a fanatical marabout named Ali Kari. The walls were breached by the guns, and two small storming parties fought their way into the streets under a hail of fire. Lt Betbeder went down with four arrows in him; the assault was pressed by the leader of the other section, Sgt Minnaërt — the hero of Son Tay, who had continued to earn medals and promotion in Indo-China and Dahomey, and who would eventually be awarded the cross of the *Légion d'honneur*. With an arrow in his ribs and a bullet across his chest, Minnaërt led the survivors of his section in the assault on the mosque which formed Ali Kari's redoubt. By the time he had taken it only some 40 légionnaires, all wounded, were left in the ranks.

Madagascar

France's interest in Madagascar stretched back to the seventeenth century. In 1885 she concluded a treaty with Queen Ranavalomanjaka III which established a French protectorate. The queen blithely ignored most of the treaty terms, and continued to intrigue with foreign governments; she imported Remington and Snider rifles and a few Krupp, Armstrong and Hotchkiss guns for her Hova tribal army, and employed European renegades as instructors. The French decision to land an invasion force in 1895 was inevitable; sadly, it was placed in the hands of the Ministry of War, rather than the much more experienced colonial authorities of the Ministry of Marine.

Every possible mistake was made. French Line infantry were included in a force which, given the extreme heat and endemic diseases of the island, should have been made up entirely of African units. Hundreds of vehicles were shipped to the landing point at the far side of the island from the capital, Tananarive, and literally thousands of soldiers were thus condemned to a miserable death while labouring to build a road for them. In heavy uniforms and full packs, the invasion force landed at Majunga in April and May 1895, and set off over 250 miles of parched mountains, primeval jungle and fever-ridden swamps; of the 14,600 soldiers and 7,000 porters, no less than 5,756 would die — seven in battle, thirteen of their wounds, and the rest of heatstroke and disease. In the van marched a *régiment de marche* from Algeria: two battalions of Tirailleurs and one of the Legion, drawn from both Foreign Regiments and commanded by Cdt Barre.

Sadly, there is no space here for a detailed account of the campaign; that in the *Livre d'Or* is recommended — it makes sombre but inspiring reading. The Legion provided the point of the column for much of the campaign; played their full part in the literally killing task of building the cart-road; and survived their ordeal better than most units in the column, some of which simply ceased to exist. A last 200km (125 mile) forced march on the capital was carried out by a light column of the healthiest remaining men, in which the 350 surviving officers and men of the Legion battalion were the largest single contingent; they carried all their own supplies, and 140 rounds per man. Throughout the campaign the armed resistance of the Hovas was extremely sporadic and unenthusiastic, and most of their good defensive positions were abandoned before the French could close with them. On 30 September Col Oudri, commanding the Algerian Regiment, installed the 1st Company of the Legion battalion in the queen's palace at Tananarive. In November the Legion retraced their costly steps to Majunga, marching by small stages and with mules to carry their packs. In December the battalion returned to Algeria, numbering 20 officers and 358 men; the original strength had been 22 officers and 818 men, and three officers and 147 men had arrived as replacements in September. Of the seven men who had died in battle, five were légionnaires.

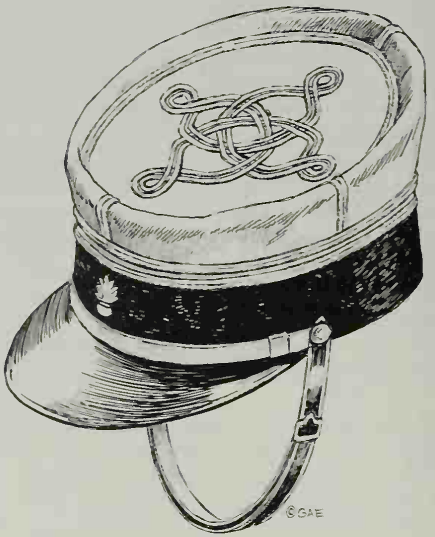
In August 1896 a new *bataillon de marche* was raised from men of both Foreign Regiments, and sent out to Madagascar as part of the occupation forces under Gen Galliéni. Two further companies, the 5th and 6th, followed in January 1899. That September these latter companies were disbanded and the men spread between the other four. In March 1900 two full battalions, the IV/1er RE and II/2e RE, were sent to Diego-Suarez, being recalled in April 1901 and November 1903 respectively. The original *bataillon de marche* was recalled to Algeria in 1904.

Uniforms, Tonkin, Dahomey and Madagascar

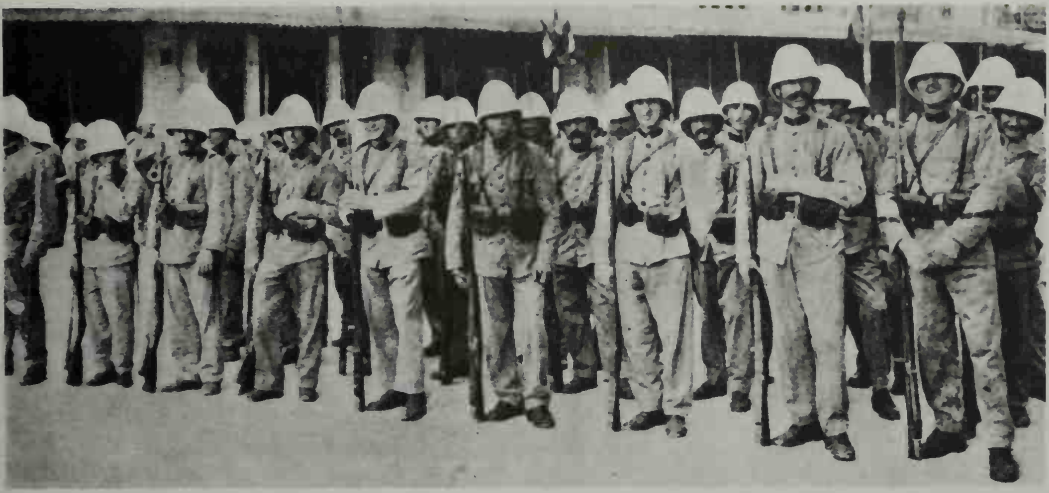
The first Legion contingent to arrive in Tonkin in 1883 wore normal Algerian *tenue de campagne: képi* with white cover and neck-flap, *capote, veste,* white campaign trousers and blue sash. The crimson trousers were also taken for the cold season. The weapon of the troops was the Gras rifle; and de Négrier, now a general commanding one of the expeditionary brigades, ordered that all his men should copy the Legion's chest pouch.

This classic silhouette did not last long. The climate, and the punishing campaign conditions, soon reduced the first uniforms to soggy rags; and the use of the greatcoat on campaign, hard enough to tolerate in Algeria, was murderous in the humid heat of Indo-China. In 1884 the légionnaires were ordered to adopt a sombre and unglamorous field uniform far better suited to the climate. The colonial helmet, although unpopular, was generally worn, its tell-tale white material covered with local cloth of black, dark blue or brown. The loose native blouse or *keo* was worn either with the white campaign trousers, or with trousers of local material, usually in black (see Plate 9, fig. 27).

Milassin states that a freighter carrying supplies of the Legion's tunics and trousers out to Indo-



Details of Legion lieutenant's *képi* of *circa* 1900, showing lace and chinstrap arrangement. (G. A. Embleton)



Légionnaires in Indo-China, apparently shortly before or during World War I. They wear the 1903 khaki Colonial uniform with white helmets; collar *écussons* appear to be as Colour Plate 12, fig. 40. The *sous-lieutenant* or *adjudant* cut by the left edge of the photograph seems to wear cuff ranking as fig. 39, but collar *écussons* as Colour Plate 10, fig. 31

China was lost off Cap St Jacques. Since the bulk of the troops employed in this theatre were drawn from the Infanterie de Marine, it was an obvious step for the Legion to draw their winter uniforms from Marine stores. The dark blue double-breasted tunic of the *marsouins* was adorned with Legion buttons and red regimental collar numbers, and, when appropriate, with epaulettes; interestingly, the blue sash was worn over this tunic, although it was never worn over the Legion tunic in Algeria (see Plate 9, fig. 30).

The helmet was worn uncovered for parades and walking-out dress. From 1886 the crimson trousers were abandoned altogether (one may presume that they lasted longer than other items simply because they got less use) in favour of the blue trousers of the Marine Infantry, piped red. When appropriate the white *bourgeron* and trousers were still worn, and officers and NCOs wore the single-breasted white jackets of the Marines when their men were *en blanc*.

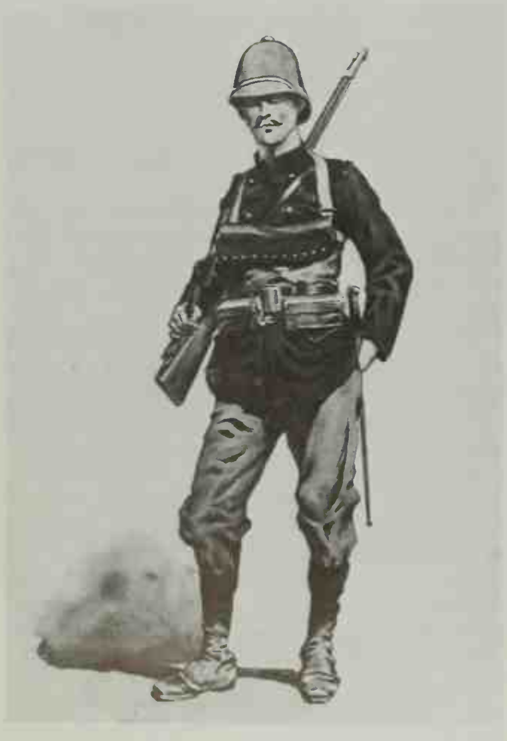
Between 1892 and 1899, as an alternative to the white *bourgeron* and native *keo* worn as barracks and hot-weather campaign dress, the Legion were issued with a single-breasted, collarless, light khaki jacket. This was of the type worn by the Senegalese troops, and was distinguished for Legion issue by dark blue braid round the neck and the top of the cuffs (see Plate 9, fig. 29). It was worn in conjunction with trousers of either white or khaki, and a khaki helmet cover.

From 1897 onwards a new white summer parade and Sunday walking-out uniform was issued. This had a single-breasted jacket with six buttons and a stand collar decorated with hook-on scarlet *écussons* bearing blue regimental numbers.

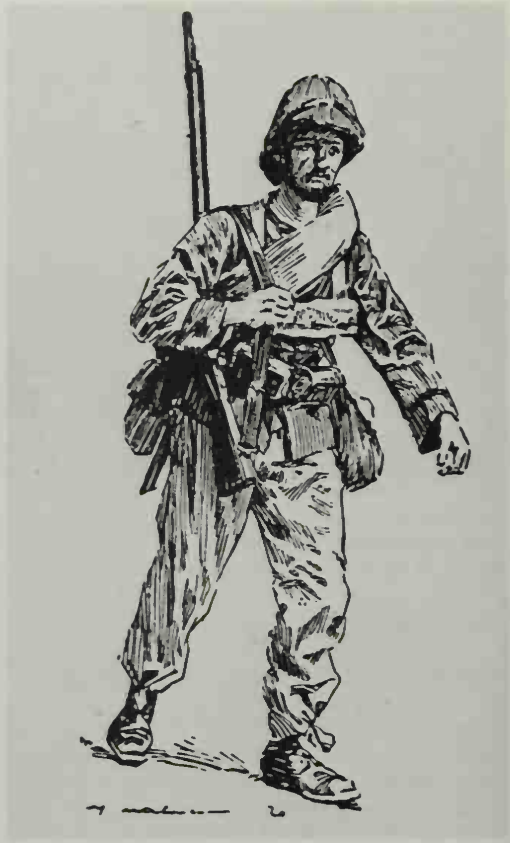
An order of February 1895 from the Ministry of the Colonies, which affected Legion units in Indo-China from 1899, replaced the khaki uniform with one of *bleu-mécanicien*, including a jacket with a stand collar. This material, of the purplish-blue shade normally associated with the working dungarees of the French peasant and labourer, was not a success. Weathering and washing faded it unevenly, and before many months a rank of soldiers on parade presented a bizarrely varied appearance. In June 1901 an order suppressed it, and from about 1903 Legion units in Indo-China received the khaki uniforms, with stand-collar jacket, illustrated in Plate 12, fig. 40. From that year onwards each man received an annual issue of one white uniform and one khaki uniform, complete with helmet cover.

Mahut shows the uniform worn for the Dahomey expedition as the collarless 1892 khaki *paletot*, the khaki-covered helmet, and either khaki or white trousers (see Plate 9, fig. 29).

For the Madagascar invasion of 1895 the Bataillon Etranger were supplied largely from Marine stores, with a multiplicity of gear of which little seems to have been used on campaign. For use in the cold weather, which somebody obviously imagined they would encounter, the Legion were issued with dark blue Marine tunics and trousers, distinguished by red grenade collar insignia and red trouser piping. They also received the collarless 1892 khaki *paletot,* white trousers [khaki, according to *L d'O(1),* but not to *L d'O(3)*], helmets adorned with brass grenade insignia from Marine Artillery sources, and with khaki campaign covers, and the Lebel rifle, 1888 triple pouches, and 1892 *bretelles* — they were the first Legion unit to receive the new weapon and harness. The 'de Négrier' chest pouch was also worn. The work of Benigni and Mahut suggests that the white fatigue *bourgeron* and trousers, worn with the blue sash, was the normal field dress in practice. Officers were authorised white trousers piped red, and jackets of both khaki and blue (see Plate 10, fig. 31). The *képi* was not worn on Madagascar, according to *L d'O,* being replaced by the grey-blue *bonnet de police.* Officers wore their ranking in the form of multiple chevrons, point upwards, on the front of the crown.



Legionnaire Bruckmann of the I/1er RE, in Tonkin, 1885, depicted in a fine painting by Rousselot, wearing: pale khaki helmet cover; plain dark blue *paletot,* red-piped epaulette *brides,* gold buttons; red trousers; blue sash; coat-cloth gaiters; coat-cloth de Négrier pouch on white straps; Gras rifle and bayonet; 'coffin' pouches on belt (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)



Drawing by Maurice Mahut of a légionnaire in Dahomey, 1892. (See Colour Plate 9, fig. 29) (*Livre d'Or/Képi Blanc*)

From 1899 the khaki uniform was replaced by the *bleu-mécanicien* described above, complete with a *bonnet de police* with a red-piped turn-up (Milassin). From about 1903 this was in its turn replaced by the stand-collar khaki uniform. The *L d'O(1)* notes that this had a line of dark blue braid round the top of the cuff; and also that the battalions (IV/1er and II/2^{e} REs) sent out to Diego-Suarez in 1900 had nothing but the white *bourgeron* and trousers. The *bonnet de police* remained the regulation headgear on the island.

6

World War I

At the outbreak of World War I each of the two regular Foreign Regiments, based at Sidi-bel-Abbès and Saïda respectively, supported a *régiment de marche* in Morocco. To these were transferred most of the German, Austrian, Turkish and Bulgarian personnel, although some chose to waive their right not to be sent into action against their own countrymen. A flood of foreign volunteers besieged the authorities in France, eager to fight in defence of what they saw as the cradle of European political freedom. It was decided to form these volunteers into new *régiments de marche* of the Legion, each of four battalions, stiffened by a strong cadre of veteran légionnaires from Africa.

The 2^e Régiment de Marche du 1^{er} RE and 2^e Régiment de Marche du 2^e RE (hereafter, for brevity, 2/1^{er} RE, 2/2^e RE) were formed at Mailly camp and given a fairly rudimentary training during September-October 1914. The equivalent of about one battalion of veterans from Africa served in each, old soldiers and recruits being mixed together to leaven the loaf. It was not a happy solution: there was a good deal of ill-feeling, and it took a considerable time for the units to settle down into a sense of regimental identity. Many of the youthful idealists were rather disillusioned by the Spartan and cheerless reality of French military life; while the veterans, proud of their scars and their campaign experience, treated with disdain this rather unwelcome 'dilution' of the traditional standards of their corps. Late in the autumn both regiments, forming with a *régiment de marche* of Algerian Tirailleurs the 1st Brigade of the Moroccan Division, were posted to quiet areas.

A 3/1^{er} RE was formed at Paris in November, largely from Belgians, Italians, and Russians. This was a rather makeshift unit, short on reliable officers and NCOs; although it suffered few combat casualties, three months in the freezing mud of rudimentary trenches on the Somme front weakened it further. It was transferred to Santerre in March 1915, and shortly afterwards large drafts were released to serve with their national armies. The remainder were dispersed to the 2/1^{er} RE.

The 4/1^{er} RE was an interesting regiment, formed in November almost entirely from Italian volunteers, and counting among its officers five members of the Garibaldi family, including the commander, Lt-Col Giuseppe Garibaldi. Its baptism of fire came on Christmas night in Bolante Woods on the Argonne, where an unsuccessful attack cost 48 dead and 170 wounded. Two days later the 'Garibaldi Brigade' attacked again at Courtes-Chausses, capturing German trenches at a cost of 125 dead and 172 wounded; among the dead were Sous-lt Bruno Garibaldi, the colonel's brother, and Adj-Chef Constante Garibaldi. Heavy fighting in January 1915 further weakened the three battalions, and in March, after suffering 429 fatalities, the regiment was disbanded at the request of the Italian government, most of the survivors transferring to the Italian Army.

The 2/1^{er} RE was committed to the Artois offensive of May 1915. On 9 May they were sent against German positions known as the 'Ouvrages Blancs' on Hill 140. They took the objective — after crossing 3,000 yards of open ground under fire — but were so terribly mauled in the process that they were unable to hold onto it when the enemy counter-attacked. In twenty-four hours the 4,000-strong regiment lost fifty officers and 1,889 men. On 15/16 June the regiment, reduced to two battalions, attacked again near Berthonval Farm at Givenchy, losing another 650 casualties without significant gain.

The 2/1^{er} RE and 2/2^e RE were both committed to the fighting around Souain Hill and Navarin Farm in Champagne in the last week of September 1915. In torrential rain they made repeated attacks on strongly fortified German positions. Small advances were made, at fearful cost.

In October 1915 the Moroccan Division was withdrawn from the line, and, in view of their terrible losses, it was decided to fuse the Legion units into a new Régiment de Marche de la Legion Etrangère (RMLE) of three battalions, the new unit coming into existence on 11 November. It took the colour of the 2/1er RE, decorated with the *Croix de Guerre* and three palms, two of which had been won by the 2/1er and one by the 2/2^{e} RE. Initial strength was 71 officers and 3,115 men, commanded by Lt-Col Cot.

On 4 July 1916 the RMLE went into the attack as part of the French Somme offensive, capturing the village of Belloy-en-Santerre and holding it against counter-attacks at a cost of a third of its strength — 25 officers and 844 men. Briefly relieved, the regiment was thrown in again on 8/9 July at Chancelier, suffering 400 casualties — among them, the American poet Alan Seeger.

After a brief respite the RMLE returned to the trenches at Santerre, suffering through the depths of winter in the snow and mud. For the first three months of 1917 they were moved about behind the line, working on preparations for the spring offensive. At dawn on 17 April the regiment attacked towards the enemy-held ruins of Auberive in the Suippes valley. On the 20th they reached and captured the main German trench line, after fighting shell-hole by shell-hole over deep mud for three days and nights. The RMLE expended some 50,000 hand grenades in this nightmare struggle, which continued for a further two days. On 21 April the legendary Adj-Chef Mader, of German birth, won the *Légion d'honneur* by successfully attacking and driving from their position the best part of a company of Saxon infantry, and capturing a battery of six guns. Mader's command in this desperate little hand-to-hand battle was a squad of just ten légionnaires.

Pulled back in May, the RMLE was sent to recuperate at Mailly. On 30 May command passed to the remarkable Lt-Col Rollet, a veteran of the mounted companies in North Africa, who would live to be the first Inspector-General of the corps, revered by all as 'The Father of the Legion'. On 14 July he led an honour guard to Paris, where the President decorated the colour of the RMLE with the *fourragère* of the *Médaille Militaire*. At the time this was a unique honour; it is thought to have been mainly in recognition of the combat achievements of this seasoned regiment, but also partly in gratitude for the unshaken loyalty displayed by the RMLE at an evil time, when other units of the French Army were visibly disintegrating.

The RMLE recorded a notable success on 20 and 21 August 1917 at Cumières on the Verdun front, making a considerable advance and capturing 680 prisoners and fifteen guns, for a loss of 53 dead and 271 wounded or missing — a light butcher's bill, by the standards of the Western Front. On 27 September, while resting near Vaucouleurs, they were reviewed by General Pétain. He announced that just as the lanyard in the colours of the *Médaille* had had to be invented to honour them, now a new *fourragère* in the crimson of the *Légion d'honneur* was to be awarded in recognition of their conduct at Verdun. He pronounced himself happy to continue to invent new decorations for them, as long as they continued to win battles. The red lanyard was officially worn from 3 November 1917.

From October 1917 to January 1918 the RMLE was at the front in the Flirey sector, recording another successful attack on 8 January. In April the Moroccan Division was rushed to the Amiens area to help halt the massive German offensive, going into action at Hangard Wood on the 25th of the month. Their attack was successful, at a cost of 18 officers and 833 men. At one point a company, and the survivors of several others, were commanded by a wounded veteran légionnaire, all senior ranks having fallen. After a brief period of rest the RMLE was moved to the Soissons area, to resist the development of the German offensive. In confused fighting at a number of points the regiment held its positions, notably at Saint-Bandry. By the time the German offensive collapsed on 12 June, total Legion casualties since late April had reached 1,250 men.

At dawn on 18 July the RMLE took part in the attack on the plateau of Dommiers, supported by Renault tanks; before the regiment was relieved on the night of 20/21 July they reached the Château-Thierry/Soissons road, at a cost of 780 officers and men.

On 2 September the RMLE was committed to the attack on the Hindenburg Line, in the region of Laffaux, going into battle with 48 officers and 2,515 men. In the course of no less than thirteen days and nights of continuous fighting they took all their objectives, and suffered roughly 50 per cent casualties — 1,433 officers and men. It was their last battle of the war. The Armistice found the RMLE in a quiet sector near Champenoux.

It is calculated that 42,883 légionnaires served in the separate *régiments de marche* and the RMLE on the Western Front between 1914 and November 1918; of these, 6,239 were Frenchmen, and no less than 36,644 were foreigners, nationals of more than one hundred countries. Of these, 5,172 were killed in action, and some 25,000 wounded or posted missing — the latter phrase certainly hiding many more dead. Of the officers, 115 were killed and about 500 wounded.

Other Fronts

In February 1915 the 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique was raised in Algeria and Tunisia from Zouaves and légionnaires, the third battalion being formed from men of the 1er and 2^{e} REs. The 1er RMA was shipped to the Dardanelles, disembarking on the Turkish coast on 27 April 1915 and going into battle near the ravine of Kereves Dere the next day. The bloody fighting which followed quickly reduced the III/1er RMA to about 120 effectives led by the last surviving captain. No immediate reinforcements were available, and it was only by bringing wounded men back into the line as quickly as possible that the unit maintained its existence. The battles of May, June and July 1915 doomed the Allied expeditionary force on this disastrous front, and the Legion battalion had nearly disappeared by the end of the summer when it received more than 700 veteran reinforcements from Tonkin. Transferred to Salonika in October, they fought the Bulgarians in Serbia later that month, before enduring a terrible winter retreat on Salonika in December. They continued to fight on this front with the 156th Division for nearly two years, and losses from sickness and battle whittled them down to about 200 again. Towards the end of 1917 they were withdrawn from Macedonia, shipped home, and absorbed by the RMLE.

A battalion of the Legion was raised by local recruitment, in north Russia, company by company, between December 1918 and July 1919, as part of the Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks. After fighting before Archangel it was disbanded, the White Russian personnel continuing to fight the Reds in French uniform under their own local commanders.

Finally, the thankless task of the stripped garrisons left in Morocco deserves mention. At the outbreak of war the Resident-General, the legendary Lyautey, had been ordered to contribute the bulk of his troops to the national effort in France, and to pull the rest back to small enclaves for the duration of the war.

The visionary coloniser refused this option; by skilled diplomacy, and exhausting footwork on the part of the few remaining units, Lyautey managed to maintain a tenuous grip on most of France's possessions in Morocco. Some posts had to be abandoned under the pressure of repeated attacks by the tribes, when the cost of garrisoning them and pushing through supply columns became unrealistically high. Others held out under almost continual siege — Khenifra became famous in this respect. There were many small and scarcely recorded Camerones, as the tribes, stirred up by German intelligence agents, seethed and snarled.

The units involved, almost entirely composed of German and Austrian légionnaires, were the I, II and VI/1er RE, the III and VI/2^{e} RE, and three mounted companies. Replacements were scarce, and in time the VI/2^{e} RE was disbanded and its effectives dispersed among the other units. By the end of the war in Europe the four Legion battalions in Morocco had an effective strength of only about six companies at full establishment.

One famous action was fought at Gaouz, in the Tafilalet region, on 9 August 1918. The mounted company of the 1er RE made repeated bayonet charges to force a path through large encircling forces for the retreating remnants of several units; led by their twice-wounded captain, tied to the saddle of a mule, they succeeded, at a cost of two officers and 50 men dead and many more wounded.

Uniforms 1914-18

The *régiments de marche* which fought in France in 1914 were distinguished from their comrades of the Line only by their collar numbers; these were the '1' and '2' of the parent Régiments Etrangers, as appropriate. Their *képi* grenades were hidden by blue denim *képi*-covers identical to those worn by all other troops (see Plate 14, fig. 44). The *L d'O(1)* suggests that blue over-trousers were also issued; photos show that this was not, in fact, universal practice. (One might speculate that the large stocks of *bleu-mécanicien* material might have been used for this purpose.) The period of France's mobilisation saw a number of obsolete items taken from store and draped round recruits, and doubtless those volunteers who enlisted in France were no exception.

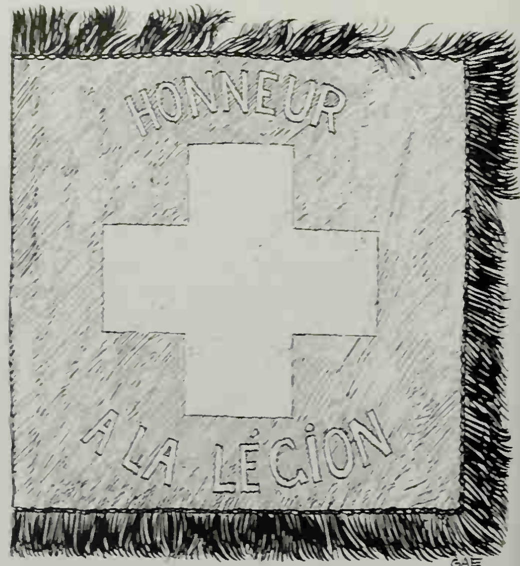
Officers and warrant officers wore either their 'number two' tunics (without epaulettes, of course) or a variety of grey-blue field jackets (see Plate 14, fig. 45). These generally had stand or stand-and-fall collars, four pockets, and integral cloth belts; details of buttoning, pocket flap shape, pleats, and so forth differed widely. These were worn with either the crimson trousers, or grey-blue trousers, confined either by blue puttees or black leather leggings. *Képis* were initially worn uncovered, but blue covers like those of the enlisted men soon made an appearance in the front lines. Coats also varied widely, appearing in varying cuts and in both blue-black and grey-blue; examples with added capes down to the elbow, in grey-blue, have been photographed.

As early as 9 December 1914 orders described a new uniform more suited to the conditions of twentieth century warfare. The Line and some Colonial units were to wear it in 'horizon blue', and African troops in a shade of mustard-khaki very similar to the British khaki of the day; the uniforms were to be identical in everything other than colour. Given the enormous task of re-uniforming an army now numbered in millions, it is not surprising that the change was accomplished in a gradual and uneven manner. From early in 1915 until the winter of 1915–16 the légionnaires of the Division Marocaine wore horizon blue (see Plate 14, fig. 46). By the early months of 1916 the RMLE was entirely in khaki, after a transitional period when both colours were worn side by side.

The uniform consisted of a tunic, a pair of semi-breeches, a greatcoat, puttees and a *bonnet de police*. The tunic was single-breasted, with five front buttons painted blue or khaki as appropriate, a low stand collar with rounded corners, two short rear vents, two internal or visible skirt pockets with rectangular horizontal flaps, with or without visible buttons, plain shoulders, a buttoned belt-loop on the left side, and plain sleeves without a turned-back cuff. Late in the war a small batch were issued without rear vents and with stand-and-fall collars. Visible in the neck of these tunics was a sandy-coloured cravat.

An alternative sometimes seen in photos of the RMLE is the *paletot colonial*, a similar tunic, but double-breasted, with two rows of five buttons; both stand and stand-and-fall collar versions are known.

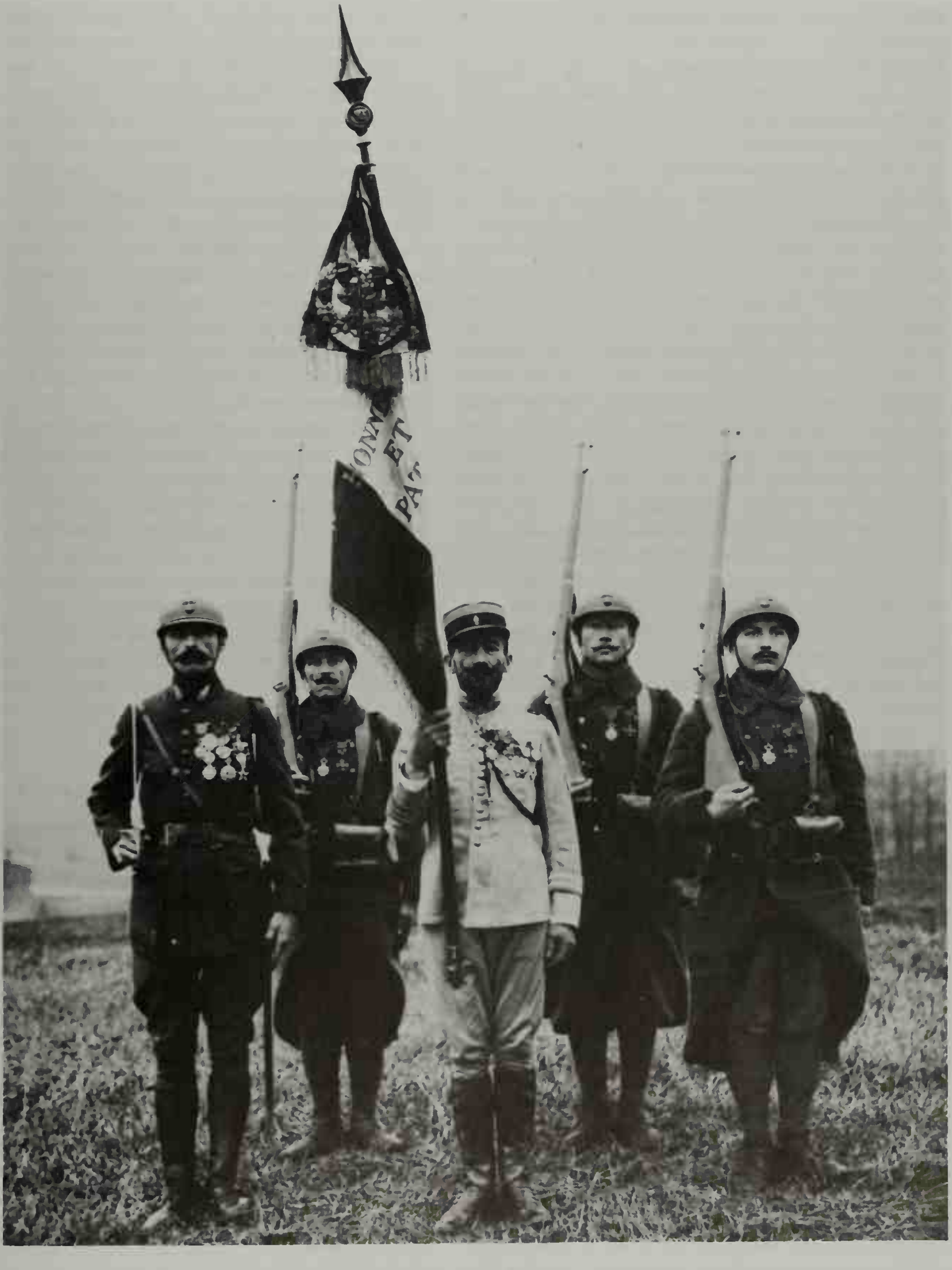
The trousers — *pantalon-culotte* — reached only to mid-calf, being confined at all times in knee-high puttees. They were cut full and rounded in the thigh, tapering to the knee and upper calf, and buttoned at the bottom. Yellow seam-piping was authorised for officers, but was quite commonly seen among enlisted men as well, on both the blue and the khaki uniforms.



The flood of recruits from all over the world led the Legion to revive the old practice of national companies for a short period early in the war. A Swiss source shows this *fanion*, presumably in white on red with a green fringe, with the caption 'Swiss company flag carried by the soldier Buvelot, from Nyon, who fell near Hangard-en-Santerre, 26 April 1918'. The RMLE certainly fought there on that date; if the caption is reliable, it suggests that national companies survived within the RMLE much later than has been supposed (G. A. Embleton)

The *capote*, habitually worn over the tunic, with skirts buttoned back in the traditional way, was issued in two main models. That authorised in September 1914 and issued in 1915 was single-breasted, with six buttons, a large fall collar with rounded points, and *brides* and buttons for rolled shoulderstraps. Initial batches had two breast pockets only, with external, buttoned, rectangular flaps. Almost immediately a modification added two skirt pockets, again with external rectangular flaps but this time with a button at each corner. Two vertical slits in the back gave access to the trouser pockets, and a button at top and bottom of each slit allowed the skirts to be fastened back from the legs. There was a belt loop on the left side and, at the back, the usual *martingale* or integral half-belt, with two buttons.

From early in 1916 a new model appeared, termed the October 1915 model; both this and the September 1914 model were worn side by side, until by the later stages of the war the 1915 model was almost universal. This was double-breasted,



The RMLE's sixth citation on 20 September 1917 brought it the first award, a few weeks later, of the crimson *fourragère* of the *Légion d'honneur*. This photograph, one of a famous sequence, shows *Lieutenant-colonel* Rollet with the colour party of the RMLE on the occasion of the award. He is escorted by (left to right) *Adjudant-chef* Mader, and *Caporaux* Rocas, Dieta and Leva. All are individually decorated with the cross of the *Légion d'honneur*. Rollet wears the uniform for which he became famous: his old summer-weight North African outfit, which he habitually wore in France (ECPA) with two rows of six buttons, and no breast pockets.

The 1915 horizon blue uniform issue included a plain *képi* of the same colour, as well as a *bonnet de police*. This latter was a rectangular 'sidecap' with a deep turn-up slightly 'scooped' at the front. In 1915 the Legion wore both headgears, the bonnet usually being reserved for off-duty wear and the *képi* remaining the fighting and parade wear. Late in 1915 the *casque Adrian* was issued, initially painted horizon blue and later in dark khaki. After its appearance the *képi* seems to have become rarer among enlisted ranks; the helmet was worn on most occasions, including parades, and one *coiffure de repos* was quite sufficient. Photographs occasionally show sergeants still wearing the black and red *képi* with their gold rank distinctions, and enlisted men of all ranks wearing it with a light khaki cover, but the bonnet was more usual. Normally the enlisted ranks' version was plain, but occasional examples with yellow piping round the turn-up, or even crimson, have been described.

The Adrian helmets issued to the Legion bore the Line infantry grenade and 'RF' cypher on the front; exceptionally, one sees in group photographs examples with such items as the grenade and anchor of the Colonial infantry and the crescent of native troops.

The uniforms of officers and warrant officers did not differ dramatically from those of their men. The normal headgear when out of action was the *képi*, frequently covered with light khaki cloth. In 1916 the *képis* of officers, warrant officers, and NCOs displayed new proportions, finally confirmed in regulations of May 1919. They became much flatter, slightly lower, and rigid in shape; the depth of the crimson crown decreased dramatically, leaving only a small strip visible above the rank lacing when seen from the level. When adopted by officers, the *bonnet de police* bore ranking *soutaches en chevron* at the front of the crown, the 'legs' of the chevrons disappearing under the turn-up.

The khaki tunics of officers and warrant officers varied widely, being privately purchased. Generally they resembled the blue-grey field jacket of 1914 (see Plate 14, fig. 45). Tight stand-and-fall collars were normal, but stand collars with rounded corners were also to be seen. There were six or seven front buttons, sometimes hidden by a fly front, two breast pockets, normally pleated, and two skirt pockets, either pleated or 'bellows', and a long central rear vent, reaching to an integral half-belt. Sleeves could be either plain, or *en botte* — i.e. with turn-back cuffs; pocket-flaps were either rectangular or three-pointed, with concealed or visible buttons. The *pantalon-culotte* were the same as worn by the men, though of better material and cut, and were confined, to personal taste, by either black or brown leather leggings, or puttees.

The same breadth of variety marked the greatcoats of officers and warrant officers. The regulation model differed from that of the men in being single-breasted, with six buttons, but double-breasted examples were not uncommon. Normally, the *capote* had a long central rear vent, designed for mounted duty, closed by four buttons when appropriate. Usually the cuffs were *en botte*. Often officers wore the skirts hanging full, rather than buttoned back.

In 1915, generally but not invariably coinciding with the issue of the horizon blue uniform, the leather equipment became brown instead of black, although boots remained black. The old belt plate was replaced with a frame buckle. Later in the war, when the character of the fighting had firmly settled into the murderous routine of static trench warfare alternating with hopeless charges across No Man's Land, the knapsack was left behind in the attack and a lightened *tenue d'assaut* was worn, consisting of belt equipment, a couple of *musettes* and a rolled tent (see Plate 15, fig. 49).

Insignia

Regulations specified two different shapes of collar patch. That for the stand collar of the tunic was basically rectangular, with a rounded inner top corner matching the collar shape, and the outside edge cut in three points. That for the greatcoat was a squat diamond shape, with a rounded or gently angled top edge. On the tunic collar patch enlisted men wore the number of the parent regiment, with two pipings at the outside edge following the three-point shape. Number and pipings were in green, which has remained the distinctive colour of the Legion ever since 1915. On the *capote* patch the number was set centrally, with the two pipings, in a curve or a shallow angle, across the top edge of the patch. (Photographs show many examples of the patches being omitted altogether; and *capote* patches with the Legion's grenade replacing the number have been illustrated.) For a matter of weeks before April 1915 the patches were yellow, but after that date they were of ground colour — horizon blue or khaki, as appropriate. Officer's tunics with stand collars seem to have born patches shaped like those of enlisted men but with the horizontal gold grenade replacing the cypher; stand-and-fall collars normally bore the grenades alone, set at an outward slant. Officers' *capote* patches bore the gold grenade vertically beneath the green pipings.

On the 1915 uniform, and thereafter, NCO ranking appeared in the form of short diagonal bars of 8mm braid on each forearm, in green and gold as appropriate. Officers wore short horizontal bars of gold lace in the same position; where the cuffs were *en botte,* the ranking could be applied either on or immediately above the turn-back. All these rankings followed the colour and number sequence of the pre-war ranking lace. Very occasionally full size pre-war cuff rings were to be seen. For quick identification of the less visible wartime rank bars, majors began to place the topmost of their four bars slightly separated from the other three.

The same year saw the re-introduction of service chevrons, now indicating not total length of service but service in the war zone (see Plate 15). Unlike the pre-war service chevrons, the wartime *brisques* were worn by officers and warrant officers too, in gold.

The Legion's blue sash was sometimes worn over the coat for parades, but was discarded or worn out of sight at other times. A more colourful addition was the system of *fourragères* adopted throughout the Army at this time, indicating the number of citations won by a particular unit by means of plaited lanyards in the colours of various medal ribbons. The RMLE was particularly honoured in this respect, as it ended the war as one of the two most heavily decorated regiments in the French Army. On 5 June 1916 the RMLE was awarded the green and red lanyard of the *Croix de Guerre.* An order of 16 June 1917 brought the first ever award of a lanyard in the yellow and green of the *Médaille Militaire.* Six Army citations brought the RMLE the red lanyard of the *Légion d'honneur* on 3 November 1917. Finally, a ministerial order of 26 February 1918 authorised the award of a double lanyard in the colours of the *Croix de Guerre* and *Légion d'honneur* to units with nine citations; in November 1918 the RMLE qualified for this remarkable distinction, shared only by the Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc. Interestingly, there are firm reports that from August 1918 a tricolour lanyard was worn for a short time.

The author has been unable to establish with any certainty what uniform was worn by the 3^{e} Bn, 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique in the Dardanelles in 1915. A poor photograph taken on the beach at Sedd-ul-Bahr shows both khaki-covered colonial helmets, and khaki-covered *képis.* It is logical to speculate that the tunic and trousers may have been the pale khaki Colonial type worn in North Africa, since the regiment had been formed in Algeria and Tunisia in February 1915. The *capotes* were certainly blue-grey. A memoir by General Regnault, who joined the Legion battalion in December 1915 at Salonika, states that 'the blue greatcoats worn over the khaki uniforms received for the Serbian campaign made a strange picture'; and that due to hard wear these coats were gradually being replaced by new ones which were 'happily, khaki'. This suggests that the khaki uniform worn in France was supplied in autumn 1915, when the regiment moved from the heat of the Dardanelles to the prospect of a freezing winter campaign in the Balkans. Photographs taken in 1916 show uniforms generally identical to those of the RMLE, with *bonnets de police,* Adrian helmets, and for officers, *képis* covered in light khaki.

The same memoir mentions that the commander of the 156th Division in winter 1915–16, General Bailloud, had a strikingly individual appearance in that he wore a pale khaki cover and neck-flap on his *képi*, 'as he had done in the heat of the Dardanelles'. The headgear is described as 'archaic', suggesting, possibly, that it was not generally worn even in the summer of 1915.

7

The Inter-War Years

For the Legion, the inter-war period was rich in incident and broad in scope. The inevitable post-war flood of recruits coincided with violent convulsions in the history of Morocco, and it was in Morocco that the Legion was concentrated in the 1920s and 1930s. Swollen to unprecedented size, the corps took a central part in the unfolding drama of hopeless garrisons holding out to the last cartridge, heroic forced marches by relief columns as desperate as the outposts they tried to rescue, and epic charges and legendary heroes, on battlefields so remote in the stony wilderness that their names appear on no modern map.

This, too, was the time of the '*caïds*', those giant figures of Legion history. The basic tactical unit was the battalion; operating independently, the individual battalion commanders stamped their personalities on their units as never before, and were given their heads by a wise commander. They were generally officers of immense resource and courage, and strong personality; they led their adoring battalions like medieval *condottieri*. In common parlance the battalions were always referred to by the name, rather than the number — it was always 'the Battalion de Tscharner', not the II/3^e^ REI; and commanders tended to stay in their commands for a considerable number of years. Along with details of the exploits, the names — Maire, Nicolas, de Corta, Cazaban, Deslandes, Prince Aage, one-armed Pechkoff, and the rest — will be found in longer histories of the Legion; and over them all the unique personality of Col Rollet, 'Father of the Legion', who commanded the 3^e^ REI until 1926, then the 1^er^ REI until 1931, when the post of Inspector-General of the Legion was created for him.

Morocco

The story of operations in this period falls into certain main categories: the return from France, and the post-war expansion; the restoration of peace in Morocco and the establishment of new posts in the Taza Corridor and the Middle Atlas; the Rif War; the final penetration of southern Morocco; and the Syrian interlude.

The end of the War, it will be recalled, found the Legion in Morocco with only four grossly under-strength battalions of the 1^er^ and 2^e^ REs, with three weak mounted companies. The infantry battalions, and the mounted company at Bou-Denib, were formed in November 1920 into a new regiment designated 4th Foreign Infantry — 4^e^ REI. A fifth battalion was raised soon afterwards. The RMLE had, in July 1920, been designated 3^e^ REI, with three battalions, based around Fez. It took over the mounted company operating in the north. The re-organised 2^e^ REI moved from Saïda to Morocco with three battalions; two mounted companies were later formed. The 1^er^ REI remained at Sidi-bel-Abbès in Algeria, at first with four battalions and later with up to seven. It served as the communal depot for all the other regiments, as well as putting individual battalions into the field itself.

In 1921 formation began of a new type of unit — the 1st Foreign Cavalry, 1^er^ REC. Raised largely from among former White Russian cavalrymen, it was formed at Sousse in Tunisia, which remained its depot; it was some time before it was ready to provide squadrons for mounted duty.

The first task of the Legion, now it had returned to Morocco in unprecedented strength and with new weapons, was to restore the reality of French peace and order in the occupied zones — a reality which had been reduced perilously close to an empty idea during the war. Then new posts had to be established, garrisoned, and held against the inevitable attacks. New roads had to be built and guarded, tying the garrisons into an effective net of occupation. Tribes which submitted had to be protected from raiders; tribes which raided had to be followed and punished; the advantages of the *Pax Gallica* had to be demonstrated, time and time again. The general character of this task will be familiar to any fan of Hollywood Westerns.

The main areas of operations in this period — 1921–24 — were the outlying parts of the mountainous and still unpacified Tache de Taza and the Middle Atlas range. The Legion played a major role in the fighting; some units were split up into companies to garrison new posts, others worked on the road network which linked them, and others took part in large-scale operations with the 'mobile groups'. Prominent were the II and III/2^e REI, and the whole of the 3^e and 4^e REIs. The 'Bataillon Nicolas', the III/3^e REI, greatly distinguished itself at Scoura on 6 May 1922 in a twelve-hour fight against swarms of Ait-Tserrouchen tribesmen. Other important actions took place at El Mers, Bou-Khamoudj, Ait-Maklouf, Immouzer and Taghzout.

A lull followed in 1924, but Lyautey was uneasily aware that it masked the gathering of the greatest threat the Legion had yet faced in Morocco. To the north, in the grim Rif Mountains, the able and sophisticated Berber leader Abd-el-Krim had risen three years before against the ramshackle colonial authorities of the Spanish coastal zone of Morocco. At Anoual in July 1921 the Rifs annihilated 12,000 Spanish troops, in a disaster which brought down the Spanish government and reduced the Spanish footholds to a few small harbour enclaves. With considerable modern armaments, including many machine guns and even some artillery, Krim now employed European instructors (including some Legion deserters) to improve the quality of his army. He had a much broader view than most tribal leaders; he cultivated useful political contacts in Europe, and declared a Republic of the Rif. If he had limited his activity to the Spanish zone he might very well have succeeded in winning general recognition, while using his European contacts to reassure the French; the Rifs were fiercely independent, and had no particular emotional stake in the fate of the tribes in the French zone. But Krim took on too many enemies at once, forcing the mutually suspicious French and Spanish into each other's arms in an alliance which eventually crushed him; though not before his tribes — whose courage, hardihood and cruelty were comparable to those of the Apaches of the American south-west — had achieved considerable victories.

In April-May 1924 Krim's Beni Uriaghel tribesmen crossed the border and attacked the pacified Beni Zeroual in the French zone. The foray did not come to much, and in response the French pushed their blockhouse line ten kilometres north of the Ouerrha River; these advance posts were garrisoned by native Tirailleurs, since the proximity of the border was felt to be too tempting to would-be deserters to risk posting Legion units there. Lyautey made urgent requests for reinforcements, and was promised ten new battalions for the spring of 1925. Only a few had arrived when, on 16 April 1925, the storm broke; the Rifs poured south over the border in a major invasion.

The outpost line facing the Rif border was submerged; nine were overrun and 30 had to be abandoned, out of a total of 66. Within ten days Fez itself was threatened. Previously pacified tribes had little option but to throw in their lot with the invaders, and the Beni Zeroual, Senadja, Branes and Tsouls rose in revolt against the Sultan. French reinforcements were thrown into action piece-meal to delay the enemy advance, *ad hoc* units being scraped up from available personnel until more battalions could be brought north; among them were the 'Bataillon Deslandes' — II/1er REI — and odd companies of the 2^e, 3^e and 4^e REI, and the 1er REC, fighting on foot. Luckily for the French, Abd-el-Krim had not expected such rapid success, and did not exploit the depth of his penetration at once. Blocked from Fez, he then tried to reach Taza, hoping to profit from simultaneous revolts in that area; but again he was blocked, and the Legion posts in the area successfully prevented any serious local outbreaks.

Once more, Lyautey refused to be panicked into precipitate withdrawal. He determined to continue the blockade of the Taza area, to maintain the corridor eastwards to Algeria, and to defend all the major Moroccan centres and ports. Reinforcements were arriving in the Atlantic ports, and from Algeria down the Oujda corridor; and the grim business of stabilising, then turning to the counter-attack, occupied many Legion units for months to come. The fighting of 1925–26 was as hard, as costly and as merciless as anything the Legion had known; the French won eventually, through superior numbers and weapons, but the Berbers often achieved important local victories. The wise légionnaire kept his last cartridge in his pocket.

Among the units brought in from other sectors and thrown straight into action were the VI/1er REI, 'Bataillon Cazaban', who distinguished themselves at Taounat on 4 May, and particularly at Mediouna on 10/11 June; there four officers and more than 60 légionnaires died in a vain attempt to save the survivors of an overrun garrison. The II/2^e REI — 'Bataillon Goret' — and III/3^e REI — 'Bataillon Boutry' — also saw hard fighting, as did the new VII/1er REI — 'Bataillon Merlet'. The

Blurred but atmospheric photograph of Legion infantry in action in Morocco in the late 1920s or early 1930s. They wear summer-weight uniforms with the fall collar of December 1920 regulations, white or very pale khaki *képi*-covers, and, in most cases, the famous *cheich* scarf

II/1er REI lost its commander, Deslandes, killed in action on 18 July at Bab-Hoceine. The mounted company of the 4^{e} was encircled and very nearly lost in the Ouezzan area; Légionnaire Siegel, with four bullet wounds and several knife wounds, was cut off in hand-to-hand fighting. Surrounded, he turned and threw his rifle high over the heads of the enemy into the French lines, so that it would not be captured . . .

By late August 1925, with reinforcements pouring in from the French occupation forces in Germany, the counter-offensive could be prepared. For the next few months order was restored among the local tribes who had risen in support of Krim, and the Tache de Taza was doubly secured. In May 1926 a massive co-ordinated drive northwards began, while the Spanish landed new troops on the coast as the upper arm of the pincers. France fielded some 70 battalions, of which eight were drawn from the 1er, 2^{e}, 3^{e} and 4^{e} REIs. Abd-el-Krim's infant republic was crushed in a matter of weeks, and he surrendered on 26 May; he was decently treated, and sent into reasonably comfortable exile with his family.

Immediately following this victory, the French turned to the final reduction of the Tache de Taza, for so many years a safe base for dissident tribes. The outlying massif of Tichoukt fell to the 3^{e} REI late in June 1926. The main range was occupied by strong forces, supported by aircraft and artillery, in July. Legion units which took part in the final defeat of Sidi-Raho's warriors were two battalions each of the 1er and 4^{e}REIs, and the whole 3^{e} REI.

In the years that followed, the penetration and pacification of the remote southern fastnesses of Morocco were steadily achieved, and Legion units played an active part in all the campaigns. The normal pattern was for mobile groups of many battalions to mount offensives in the spring and summer, establishing new lines of advanced outposts before the descent of the hard winter. Lonely little garrisons would cling to these isolated posts during the winter, and the next spring the mobile forces would be assembled for new offensives. With aircraft, artillery, and light armour, the French and native troops inevitably overcame the tribal resistance; but the fighting was often hard, and life in the little forts during winter was extremely hazardous.

The full story would take many pages, but certain milestones can be listed. In June 1929 the II/3^e REI saw heavy fighting at the posts of El Bordj and Ait-Yakoub. That October the mounted company of the 1er REI had serious losses in a fight at Djihani. Between 1930 and 1932 a gradual encirclement and final reduction of the Tafilalet was achieved; this was a large plateau which acted as a refuge for dissidents driven out of pacified areas. Legion infantry and cavalry were involved; two hard fights occured at Tarda-Tadighoust in August 1930, and on the Issaf and at Tazigzaoust in September 1932. The mounted companies of the 1er, 2^e and 3^e REIs were committed to the reduction of the Djebel Sagho in early 1933, along with infantry and cavalry elements. In summer 1933 the final areas of dissidence were attacked; the 2^e and 4^e REIs, particularly, were involved in fighting at Djebel Msedrid, Timarine, Aghbalou, and finally at Mount Baddou. With the surrender of the chieftain Ouskounti, and the remarkable female warrior Lalla Tazibout, the campaign of pacification was finally completed. Minor 'mopping up' and punitive operations would continue for years, but major resistance to French rule had been snuffed out. The 4^e REI, prominent in most of these campaigns, became the Legion's main garrison in Morocco, with battalions at Marrakesh, Ouarzazate, and Agadir; and a motorised mounted company at Foum-el-Hassan which patrolled the vast emptiness of the southern Moroccan deserts and mountains, as its Algerian counterpart from the 1er REI performed the same duties from Bou-Denib and later Tabelbala.

Syria

Syria was granted to France as a mandate territory after World War I. In March 1921 the IV/4^e REI landed at Beirut, followed in August by the V/4^e, and later still by the 4th Squadron of the 1er REC. For three years the task of establishing French authority in this former outpost of the ruined Turkish empire proceeded fairly quietly, with only minor skirmishes from time to time; in November 1924 the IV/4^e was disbanded and its personnel sent back to North Africa. A few months later a major rising by the fierce Druze tribes of the Syrian hills plunged the territory into disorder. Led by a chief named Soltan el Attrache, the Druze swarmed down towards the coastal plain. On 22 July 1925 the Legion company led by Capt Normand suffered heavy losses at Kafer, south-east of Soueida; eight officers and 107 men were killed or wounded in this action, and the Druze cut off Soueida.

A column was quickly sent to relieve the town, led by the V/4^e REI (Cdt Kratzert), with the 4th Sqn, 1er REC and a platoon of armoured cars under command. Halting at the village of Mousseifré (or Messifré), Kratzert received a heliograph message to the effect that some 3,000 Druze were moving to attack him. The légionnaires quickly busied themselves preparing the little village for defence, building stone barricades, laying wire, and siting machine guns. Unknown to them, they were walling inside a strong band of hostiles who had infiltrated the village population. At dusk on 16 September 1925 the Legion force was ready. During the night an attack from the north on one of the company positions was driven off without too much difficulty; but at first light a second and much more massive assault suddenly fell on the improvised fortress from all sides, the Druze having crept close under cover of darkness. Worse, the infiltrators and their sympathisers within the village opened fire from the roof-tops into the backs of the men defending the perimeter. Confused hand-to-hand fighting broke out in the alleys and courtyards of the village, with groups of Muslims knifing and shooting down the légionnaires as they struggled to establish a secure perimeter and to silence the marksmen on the roofs. For a time things looked desperate.

As the light improved the armoured cars were able to bring their guns into action, blowing the groups of snipers off the roof-tops. The infantry and troopers — most of whose horses had been butchered in their lines by Muslims fighting inside the village — managed to maintain a secure perimeter, and repulsed repeated attacks from outside the walls, which finally began to slacken at about 10 am. Fighting continued all morning, but with decreasing intensity. French aircraft appeared overhead early in the afternoon, bombing the Druze and their horse and camel lines; discouraged, the tribesmen finally withdrew. They are reckoned to have suffered about 500 dead and a similar number wounded. Legion casualties were 47 dead and 83 wounded.

The other major action of this campaign was fought at Rachaya between 20 and 24 November 1925. Another small village, badly laid out for defence in that the ruins of a medieval citadel were surrounded by a press of houses and alleys huddling close to the rudimentary walls, this was the base of the 4th Sqn, 1er REC and a squadron of the 12th Tunisian Spahis; Capt Landriau commanded the légionnaires, Capt Granger the Spahis and the position. The first attack came late on the 20th, catching the troopers as they were watering their horses. The Druze were thrown back, but continued to launch attacks for three days and nights. They quickly established themselves in the houses and ruins close to the French perimeter, and at one point, apparently by crawling through old tunnels in the ruins, they took over part of the fort itself, and killed the tethered horses of the garrison. Bitter hand-to-hand fighting continued almost without pause; vital walls and corners changed hands in fierce charges with bayonet and grenade from a few yards' range. By the evening of the 23rd the garrison faced disaster. The grenades had been used up, and ammunition was down to fifteen rounds per man. Landriau — in command since Granger's death on the 22nd — sent off his last carrier pigeon, announcing his intention of trying a break-out with the bayonet if help did not arrive shortly. The next morning the Druze attacks continued; carefully husbanding their cartridges the légionnaires kept up a thin fire from the walls, and prepared to *faire Camerone*. At the last moment, French aircraft appeared and attacked the tribesmen massed round the walls, and advance elements of the 6th Spahis took them in the rear. The epic defence of Rachaya cost the 4th Sqn, 1er REC 58 dead and wounded, and won them a place alongside the V/4e REI in an Army citation.

The Druze revolt petered out after a number of smaller engagements, but the Legion maintained garrisons in Syria until 1941. Battalions were stationed there in rotation, accompanied by squadrons of the cavalry regiment, and usually incorporating a mounted company. In October 1939 the battalions currently in garrison in Syria — the I, IV and VI/1er REI and the II/2e REI — were amalgamated into a new, three-battalion regiment designated 6e REI.

Indo-China

The Legion garrison was steadily reduced before and during World War I; only one battalion remained by 1917, and that was withdrawn in 1919. The following year the first of several new battalions appeared: in 1920, the IV/1er REI; in 1921, the IV/2e REI, re-designated IX/1er in 1926; in 1927, the VII/1er REI; and in 1930, the I/1er REI. The 5e REI was created in September 1930 from the latter three units.

* * *

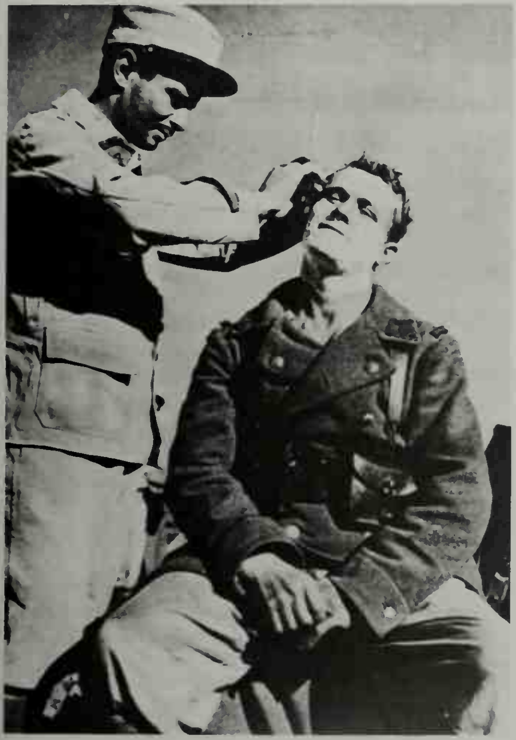
A fairly uneventful routine of road-building and repetitive patrolling and police work occupied the Legion in the late 1930s, in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, and Indo-China. In 1936 there were a total of 17 battalions in existence: five in the 1er REI and three each in the 2e, 3e, 4e and 5e REIs. In addition, the 1er REC, based in Tunisia with squadrons detached to serve in Morocco and Syria, had four horsed and two motorised squadrons. In 1939 the 1er REI was raised to seven battalions and the 2e to four; the four squadrons of the cavalry based in Morocco were split off as the new 2e REC. (The 2e and 4e REIs had their own integral artillery batteries; and a 'Batterie Saharienne' — though not yet known by that title — was formed in 1939 at Ouargla, and later split into two.)

Uniforms 1919-39

Infantry

The uniforms worn in North Africa in 1919–20 were of anarchic variety. The rump of Legion garrisons left in Africa during the war had worn the pre-war khaki drill and white fatigue uniforms, and combinations of them such as the khaki jacket with white trousers. The old blue-grey *capote* was still in use; and in garrison towns the blue and crimson walking-out dress was still to be seen. The returning RMLE, soon re-named 3e REI, wore its mustard-khaki uniform complete with the double *fourragère*. Quantities of horizon blue clothing were issued to recruits during the period of post-war expansion; and considerable use was made of stocks of ex-US Army khaki uniforms left behind in France by the departing American Expeditionary Force. These were of a darker shade of khaki than the French uniforms, and had square-cut stand collars and four patch pockets. They existed in two weights, the summer drill cloth version being of a khaki with slightly more green in it. (These ex-US uniforms remained in use for some years, particularly the half-breeches.)

Regulations of 1920, modified in various minor



A shave in the desert: 4^{e} REI in 1938. The *soldat de 1ère classe* wielding the razor wears summer sand-khaki uniform with hooked-on cuff chevron, and his *képi*-cover appears to be the same shade. The légionnaire on the receiving end wears the same uniform with the mustard-khaki greatcoat. This has a line of green piping above the cuff, and green-piped *brides* for epaulettes. Both wear khaki collar *écussons* with green pipings and cyphers, and the coloured spot below the cypher which identified battalions within the 4^{e}. The text gives details (R. G. Harris)

respects in subsequent years, restored some uniformity to the picture, but the using-up of old stocks of every kind of item ensured that there was less than perfect consistency throughout the 1920s. Basically the Legion infantryman of 1920–27 had two uniforms, one for winter and one for summer.

The winter dress was that of the wartime RMLE: a stand-collar tunic with five buttons, skirt pocket flaps, two vents behind the hips, a cloth belt-loop on the left, plain cuffs. It was worn with the *pantalon-culotte* and puttees, and the fall-collar, double-breasted greatcoat, all in mustard-khaki. Unlike the rest of the Army, which kept the *bonnet de police* as everyday service headgear after the war, the Legion reverted to the *képi*; but it should be mentioned that the bonnet was also used, both in khaki and in pre-war blue-grey, in the early 1920s. The *képi* remained the pre-war dark blue and red model, with the red grenade badge; as old stocks were used up a new model appeared in the mid-1920s which resembled the wartime NCOs' type, being flat rather than high at the back, and more rigidly cylindrical than before. The crimson crown was now extremely shallow; pipings remained unchanged.

In the field and for everyday duty it was almost invariably shrouded in a pale khaki drill cover, usually washed or bleached almost or completely white. (The neck-flap was virtually unknown in infantry regiments after 1918, but survived well into the 1930s in the Mounted Companies and cavalry — see below.) The white cover was a non-regulation 'fantasy' of the Legion, which sometimes caused apoplexy to senior commanders when Legion units arrived to take part in large-scale operations. They were often ordered to re-dye the covers with tea, coffee, or potassium permanganate. The cover was always removed for parades and walking-out, when the blue sash was also worn, over the tunic but not usually over the greatcoat.

Leather equipment was normally of the 1915 brown pattern, but pre-war black stocks were sometimes seen. In the field there was a widespread adoption of the *cheich* or muslin desert scarf, taken over from the mounted companies, who had started using it before the war. From ten to fifteen feet long, it was worn doubled round the neck, the loose ends passed through the loop thus formed. This useful item was used to give warmth in cold weather, and was wrapped round the head and face for protection against sun and sand in hot weather. It was pressed into service as a bandage, a sling, a shroud, even a coffee-mill — a handful of beans could be knotted into the cloth and pounded with a rifle butt. The *cheich* was a feature of the légionnaire's campaign uniform throughout the inter-war period, and cropped up for many years thereafter — some surprisingly recent examples will be found in news photographs of the 1970s. Gradually it became common for officers to wear white scarves and enlisted ranks pale khaki ones. The loose ends were often tucked under or wrapped round the belt buckle.

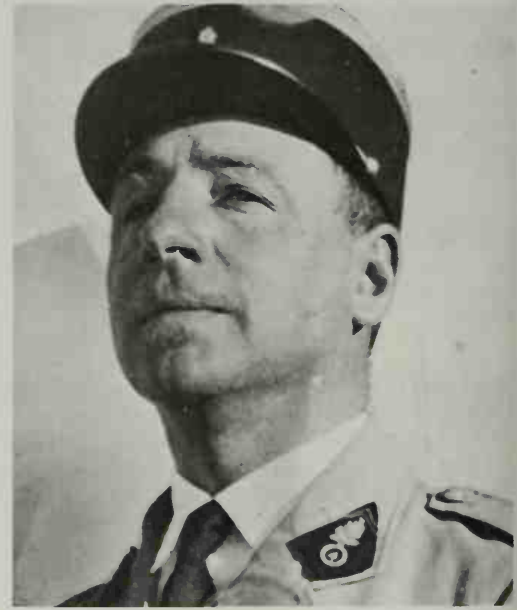
The collar patches of the period presented a considerable variety of designs, all of which were observed in roughly simultaneous use in various regiments. Those for the tunic were of wartime shape: khaki 'rectangles' with the top inner corner sometimes rounded to match the collar shape, and the outer edge either vertical or *en accolade*. Double green pipings, *en accolade*, marked the outer edges. Normally a green regimental number was worn, but Milassin lists variations including a slanted green grenade with the number in the 'bomb', and gold versions of both types sometimes worn by NCOs. On the *capote* the patch remained a khaki lozenge edged at the top with double green piping either in a curve or a shallow angle. Again, the norm was a green regimental cypher, but there were also examples of green grenades, a green grenade over or below a cypher, and gold cyphers or grenades worn by some NCOs.

From 1920 –21 the sleeve ranking changed from the wartime diagonals to cuff chevrons worn point upwards, the 'legs' butted down to the top line of the cuff. The *soldat de 1ere classe* and *caporal* wore one and two green chevrons, and the *caporal-fourrier* two green chevrons, and a gold diagonal on each upper arm. *Sergents* and *sergents-major* wore two and three gold chevrons. (The French Army made a distinction between conscript sergeants during their legal term of military service, and career NCOs who stayed on after the obligatory period, the former wearing one gold chevron only. In practice this did not apply in the Legion, where it was not possible to become a sergeant with less than five year's service.) On the winter khaki uniform these were made up from straight bars of braid (see Plate 16, fig. 50, the commentary on which also discusses non-regulation use of service chevrons at this time).

The summer uniform was very similar to the light khaki drill outfit worn in Morocco as campaign dress since *circa* 1909. The stand collar was rounded off. (It seems likely that in the early post-war period the straight slacks of this uniform continued to be worn under the puttees; they were certainly much in evidence as fatigue dress. A *pantalon-culotte* of lightweight khaki drill cloth was issued, perhaps from 1922 onwards.) For parades and walking-out in garrisons it was worn with the skirts of the jacket tucked inside the trousers, the blue sash covering the join. (The *L d'O (1)* suggests that this was not done in the 3e REI.) The same collar insignia and cuff ranking were worn as on the winter uniform, backed by the same dark khaki, but hooked temporarily in place rather than sewn. Generally the cuff chevrons of the summer uniform were of a 'scooped' shape rather than straight bars (see Plate 22, fig. 69). In action the insignia were often ommitted altogether, since the greatcoat was normally worn. Photographs of the Moroccan fighting of the early 1920s show summer tunics both tucked in, and falling free over the trousers.

The greatcoat remained the habitual campaign dress, over either the khaki uniform or the white fatigue *bourgeron;* on the latter the ranking was still displayed on buttoned chest tabs of blue or, subsequently, khaki cloth. Sometimes the greatcoat was worn directly over a collarless shirt in a finely patterned ticking material of blue and white. The 'whites' seemed to have been worn in the field frequently by the mounted companies. These were not distinguished from infantry units by any regulation insignia, but generally enjoyed more freedom of dress on campaign. Full-cut native *seroual* trousers were sometimes adopted, in white; the hobnailed *naïl* sandal was often worn, and the *képi* neck-flap and *cheich* have already been mentioned. It is recorded that in the hottest conditions they sometimes marched in underpants!

In Tonkin Legion garrisons were issued with the khaki drill uniform and white fatigues, and with the old 'melon cloche' colonial helmet



Capitaine Louis Gaultier, the popular commander of the 4e REI's Compagnie Montée Automobile, photographed in 1939. The opening of the officer's tunic collar in May 1938 produced a variety of small differences in the shape of the *écusson*: this 'reversed diamond' is interesting (Milassin) covered in both white and khaki — it had virtually disappeared from North Africa, and was only worn occasionally in the most southerly posts. Tonkin garrisons also received a white walking-out tunic and trousers of pre-war cut; the tunic had hooked-on collar patches of black with green cyphers and pipings, and sometimes black rank chevrons replaced the regulation green. This seems to have been the origin of a white walking-out dress observed in Morocco in the 1920s and 1930s, worn by the 2e and later the 4e REI. Possibly those elements of the 2e based in Indo-China passed the fashion on to those elements in Morocco, who spread its use to the new 4e REI when that regiment was formed from battalion of the 1e and 2e REI (see Plate 16, fig. 51).

Officers and warrant officers had a number of different dress orders. The normal winter daily service dress, also worn on campaign, consisted of a four-pocket tunic with a tight stand-and-fall collar, in khaki wool (see Plate 17, fig. 54), worn with pale cord breeches of a shade known as 'mastic', and puttees, brown leggings, or riding boots. The *képi,* of the stiff cylindrical shape adopted during World War I, and taller than that of the men, could be covered when in the field with a pale khaki drill muff. For No. 1 dress there was a tunic of similar cut worn with straight slacks falling to the instep, both being in a greenish khaki shade known as 'reseda'; this seems to have passed out of use gradually, being replaced by the conventional khaki shade. In summer a khaki drill version of the tunic was worn, either with 'mastic' or lightweight drill breeches, the latter cut tighter in the thigh than the former, or with the straight khaki drill slacks. Considerable freedom was allowed when on campaign. Insignia are discussed under Plates 17 and 19.

Between the World Wars the personal equipment of the légionnaire remained little changed from that of the RMLE. The two-litre *bidon* and light brown or unbleached *musette* were worn in the field, the knapsack less often; the 2e REI dispensed with it altogether, and where necessary extra kit was carried in a horseshoe roll of tent cloth.

The lebel 1886/93 remained the standard infantry rifle, but '07/15 and 1916 rifles were also observed. In the mounted companies, and later in the cavalry, the 1916 Lebel carbine was the norm. Senior NCOs and machine gunners carried sidearms — 1873 or 1892 revolvers; officers and *adjudants* carried Ruby or Star semi-automatics. The Hotchkiss machine gun was used in large numbers; during the Rif War its issue seems to have been fairly *ad hoc,* but later most infantry battalions formed a separate machine gun company. In the late 1920s the sturdy FM.24/29 automatic rifle was issued, one per platoon. Some regiments also had light mortar companies.

Between 1925 and 1927 there was a progressive issue of a new tunic, in both winter and summer weights. This, officially the model of the December 1920 regulations, had a fall collar with long points, worn buttoned closed over the usual pale khaki cravat. It had seven front buttons; plain round cuffs; the same rectangular, slightly backwards-sloped skirt pocket flaps as before, and no rear vent. (Prior to 1931 shoulderstraps were

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Plate 17: Morocco, 1920s–30s

54. Chef de bataillon, circa 1925: *A composite from photographs, particularly one of Chef de Bn Deslandes, II/1er REI. Officer's temperate climate service dress; the collar patch had a gold grenade and green pipings on a khaki ground. Details of design and proportions varied widely; some seem to have gold piping, and dark blue backing in place of khaki was common. This is the 'demi-Saxe' collar, generally replaced by the longer-pointed 'Aiglon' type from 1933.* **55 (Kneeling). Légionnaire, summer campaign dress,** circa 1925: *A composite from photographs. Collar* écussons *were often omitted in the field. Note belt-loops; these seem from photographs to have been set too high, and often hung loose. This soldier, in a tight spot during the Rif War, has an issue of F.1 defensive hand grenades, painted grey-blue. The grenade was one of the new weapons the Legion brought back from France, and used enthusiastically in Morocco.* **56 (Background). Légionnaire, Compagnie Montée,** circa 1930: *A composite, from photographs and items in the Legion Museum. The use of white fatigues on campaign lasted longer in cavalry and mounted units than in the infantry. The* cheich *is worn at the throat, and the blue sash at the waist. Native sandals —* naïls *— were a practical alternative to boots in soft sand. Various successive modifications of the old 1892 Lebel carbine — those of 1916, 1920 and 1927 — were generally used by mule companies, and also found their way into infantry companies by this date. The Hotchkiss machine gun, for which this soldier carries ammunition, was widely used by all categories of Legion unit in the 1920s and 1930s.*

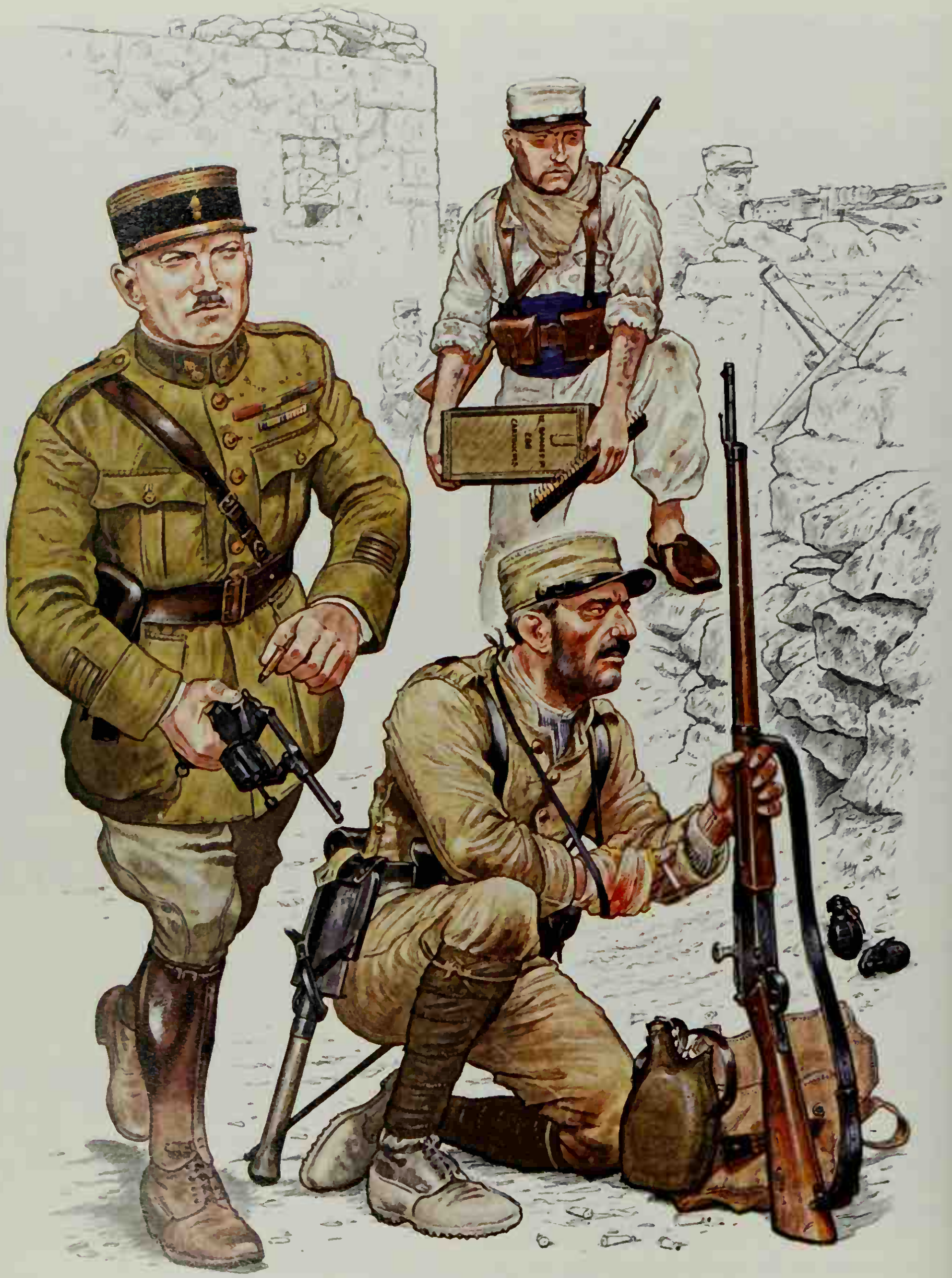

Plate 17: Morocco, 1920s-30s

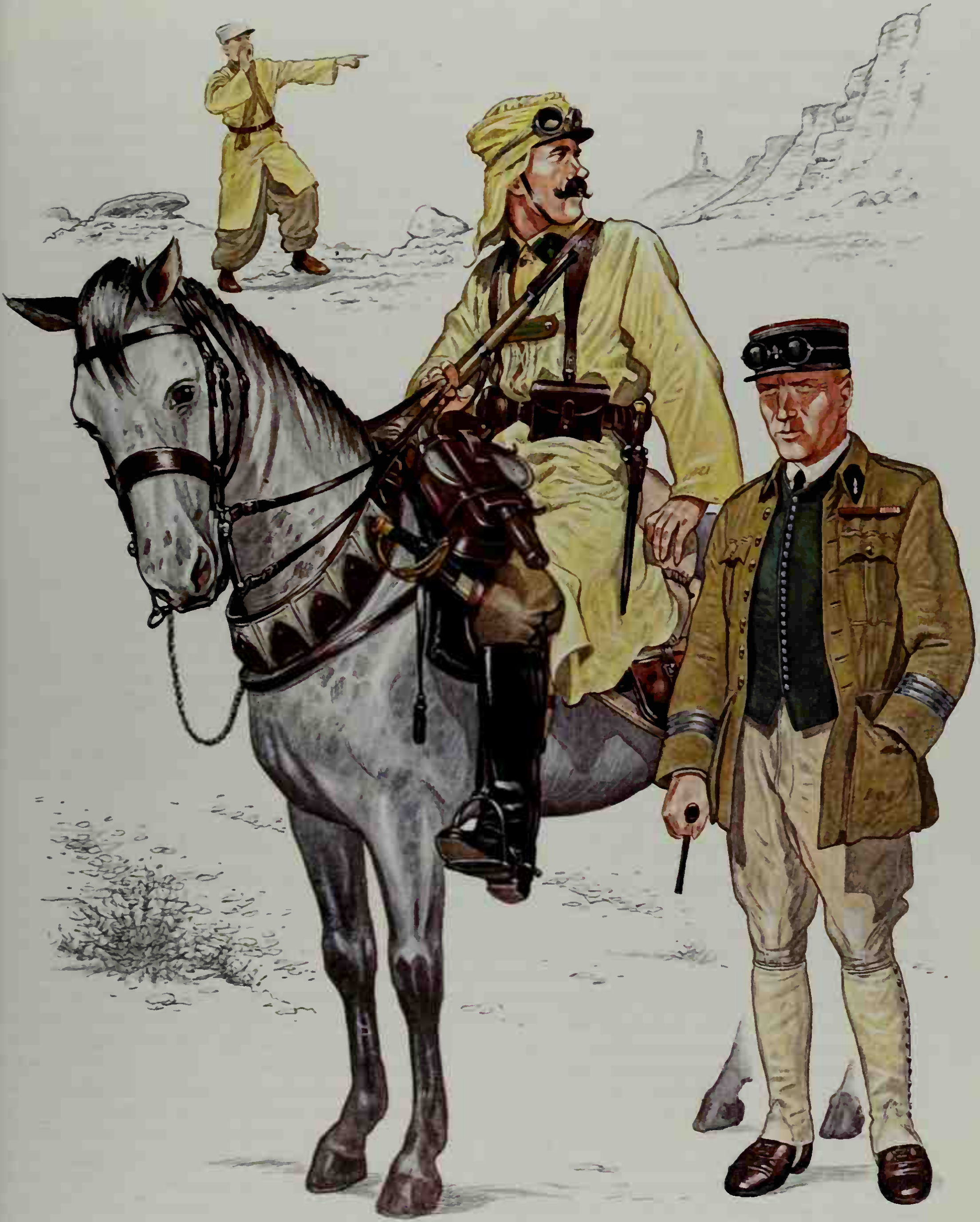

Plate 18: 1er REC, 1920s-30s

normal; after that date the Legion substituted epaulette *brides* of green or green-piped khaki.) The winter, mustard-khaki version normally had brass hooks in the rear seams, replacing the belt-loops of the summer version. Collar patches became more standardised for coat and tunic alike; the lozenge shape of dark khaki bore the green regimental cypher within two angles of double green piping. (Some NCOs continued to wear gold cyphers, however.)

The year 1929 saw several changes. NCO ranks were slightly re-organised. The *fourrier* disappeared, and in his place, with the same insignia, came the *caporal-chef.* The *sergent-major* became the *sergent-chef,* with three gold chevrons. The sergeant with two chevrons was known as the *sergent de carrière* — in practice, this embraced all Legion sergeants. The *sergents* and *sergents-chef* received a new tunic with breast pockets, which began to be worn in quantity in the early 1930s.

A ministerial circular of September 1929 officially restored the use of service chevrons, worn to the full width of the upper left sleeve of tunic and *capote*. Enlisted men wore them in green; NCOs officially wore green on the *capote* and gold on the tunic. They were unbacked, and always of straight shape; the top one was placed with its point 120mm below the shoulder seam. One was worn for five years' completed service, two and three for ten and fifteen years respectively. Since twenty years was the maximum officially permitted service in the Legion, those 'lifers' who wished to sign on for another five years had to re-enlist under another name and start acquiring *chevrons d'ancienneté* from scratch!

A ministerial decision of November 1930, put into effect early in 1931, reflected the success of Colonel Rollet's lobbying for the restoration of the green and red *epaulettes de tradition* in time for the centenary ceremonial; between 1918 and 1931 they had been worn only by the *tête de colonne* of the 1er REI. They were worn for parades and walking-out from then on, and *brides* in green or in gold with a red 'light' were added to No 1 tunics by enlisted ranks and senior NCOs respectively — the epaulettes were not worn by *adjudants* or officers, of course.

The various regimental *têtes de colonne* were generally reflections of the taste of the colonel of the day, and the state of regimental funds. No comprehensive listing is possible here, but a few peculiarities may be mentioned. Drum and bugle banners varied in design, but red and green with a seven-flame grenade motif were common. Some regiments, including the 1er and 3e REI in 1931 and the 2e soon afterwards, had squads of sappers in whitened leather aprons, who paraded with the traditional felling axe. The *tête de colonne* of the 2e had trumpeters rather than buglers; and those of the 2e and 3e had white leather equipment. The 1er was the proud possessor of a Jingling Johnny, known in the Legion as the 'Chinese Hat'. (This is perhaps the logical place to note that bandsmen wore a green lyre badge on the left upper arm,

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Plate 18: 1er REC, 1920s–30s

57 (Mounted). Brigadier, Rakka, Syria, 1927: *A composite figure in summer campaign dress, from Benigni,* L d'O(1), *and photographs; see Guyader,* G d'U no 45. *The* cheich *is wrapped round the* képi, à la Tcherkess, *and motoring goggles are strapped over it. Sand-khaki summer tunic and mustard-khaki breeches are worn beneath the sand-khaki* gandourah, *which has a rank tab on the chest. Tunic collar patches are exposed, here the regulation type with green regimental numbers over grenades and green pipings on regulation blue background. Blue seam-piping was sometimes worn on the breeches. The carbine was normally slung, but some NCOs carried it in a right saddle bucket, balancing the sabre, carried* à la Spahi *on the left in a canvas and leather scabbard-sleeve. Note bayonet on left of belt, three pouches, Y-straps, slung canteen, and silver buttons. The horse collar of cartridge pouches was seen in both brown leather, and mixed leather and canvas, as were the large rear saddle bags beneath the roll of tent cloth and greatcoat. Front wallets bear a holstered billhook, canvas bucket, and picket pin with a chain to the bridle.* **58. Capitaine, Bou-Denib, Morocco, 1927:** *Officer's casual service dress, from a photograph in Jacques Weygand's* 'Légionnaire'. *Silver cavalry distinctions throughout, including old-fashioned rank rings round the cuffs. Many-buttoned waistcoats were popular since the days of the Second Empire, originally in black or dark blue, but increasingly in green after World War I. The canvas gaiters seem to be private acquisitions.* **59 (Background). Légionnaire, Djebel Sagho, Morocco, 1933:** *From a well-known group photograph. Light khaki* cheich *worn crossed at the front, and* culotte de spahis, *the baggy* seroual-*type alternative to cavalry breeches, gathered at the ankle.*

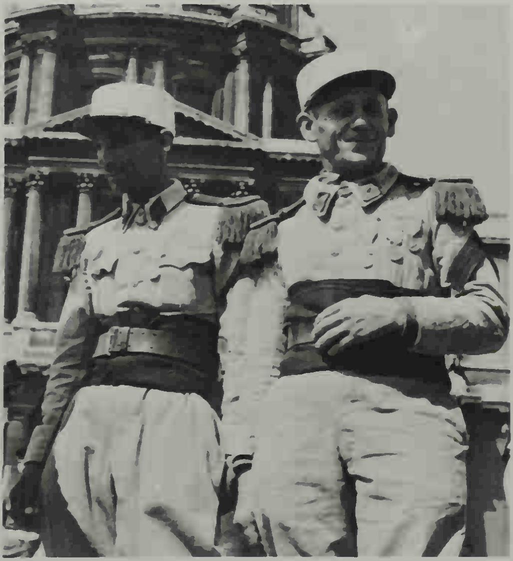
buglers a ring of tricolour lace round the top of the cuff, and drummers a ring of yellow lace.)

In 1931–32 the French Army officer received a new *grande tenue* consisting of a black frock coat with various distinctions of branch and unit, worn with crimson trousers with a black sidestripe, epaulettes, and a parade swordbelt (see under Plate 22). This was not worn by warrant officers.

In April 1932 the *képi* grenade was increased from 20mm to 30mm high; in 1935 the crimson crown was reduced in height to a mere 12mm, an order which in fact confirmed dimensions current for some years before. Re-enlisted NCOs — in practice in the Legion, all sergeants — received a *képi* of taller outline, a stiff cylindrical model, almost square in side elevation. Photos indicate that they did not wear the strip of button-colour piping around the top edge ordered for *sous-officiers de carrière* in the Army as a whole. From the same year, uniforms of winter weight became a darker shade of khaki.

In 1935 a new walking-out uniform was allowed for NCOs, who could wear their tunic over straight slacks and black shoes, while junior ranks retained the *culotte* and puttees. The blue sash was not, apparently, worn over the tunic with this new dress order for sergeants, which was extended to *caporals-chef* in some regiments.

From 1933 officers were ordered to wear a new tunic collar shape, known as the *col Aiglon;* still of stand-and-fall design, it had long, pronounced points. Collar patches became longer to match this style. In May and September 1938 officers and *adjudants* respectively were ordered a new, four-button, open-collar tunic with stepped lapels; the patches — by now, it seems, normally dark blue — became pentagonal, with green pipings on the top two edges, and the bottom edge butted against the



Summer parade uniform worn in Paris, July 1939, by an NCO (left—note cuff chevrons just visible, and breast pockets) and a veteran légionnaire of the 1er REI. The *képi*-covers are white (See Colour Plate 22, fig. 70.)

Plate 19: North Africa, 1930s

60. Capitaine, probably 2e REI, Morocco, August 1933: *From a photograph in Ward Price's* In Morocco with the Legion, *showing an officer at Mt Baddou. The* gandourah *was often worn as campaign dress by infantry officers. Here the collar patches of the light khaki summer uniform are carefully exposed, showing gold grenades on the dark blue ground often observed.* **61. Clairon, II/4e REI, Morocco, 1938:** *From a photograph, much reproduced and variously captioned, and the notes of Charles Milassin and Raymond Guyader. This infantry company bugler, widely seen in a January 1939 issue of* Picture Post, *wears summer campaign dress. The collar patch has a red spot below the cypher, identifying the battalion. Green cuff piping is evidence of the 4e REI's apparently isolated obedience to the circular of October 1935. 'Scooped' summer style chevron on each cuff is unusual; usually coat chevrons were the straight winter style. The weapon is the 1916 carbine. The bugle has tricolour cords and a leather sling. Other colours are known; a bugle in the author's possession, carried in the Rif War, has mixed red and yellow cords.* **62. Trompette, 1er REC, Sousse, Tunisia, 1937:** *From photographs and notes,* G d'U no 48. *This member of the mounted* fanfare *wears winter parade uniform. The October 1935* képi *has only 12mm of crimson crown visible, and the 30mm grenade. May 1926 regulation collar* écussons, *with a green cypher and grenade on blue cavalry backing, butt against the ends of a line of tricolour musician's lace all round the collar; another line is worn round the cuffs. From 1935 a lighter green was specified to distinguish cavalry from infantry insignia, but how widely this was worn is not clear. The trumpet banner shown replaced a simpler type in 1937; the 1920s type had a wide green braid set in from the edge round three sides; red fringes; and a green grenade in the centre.*

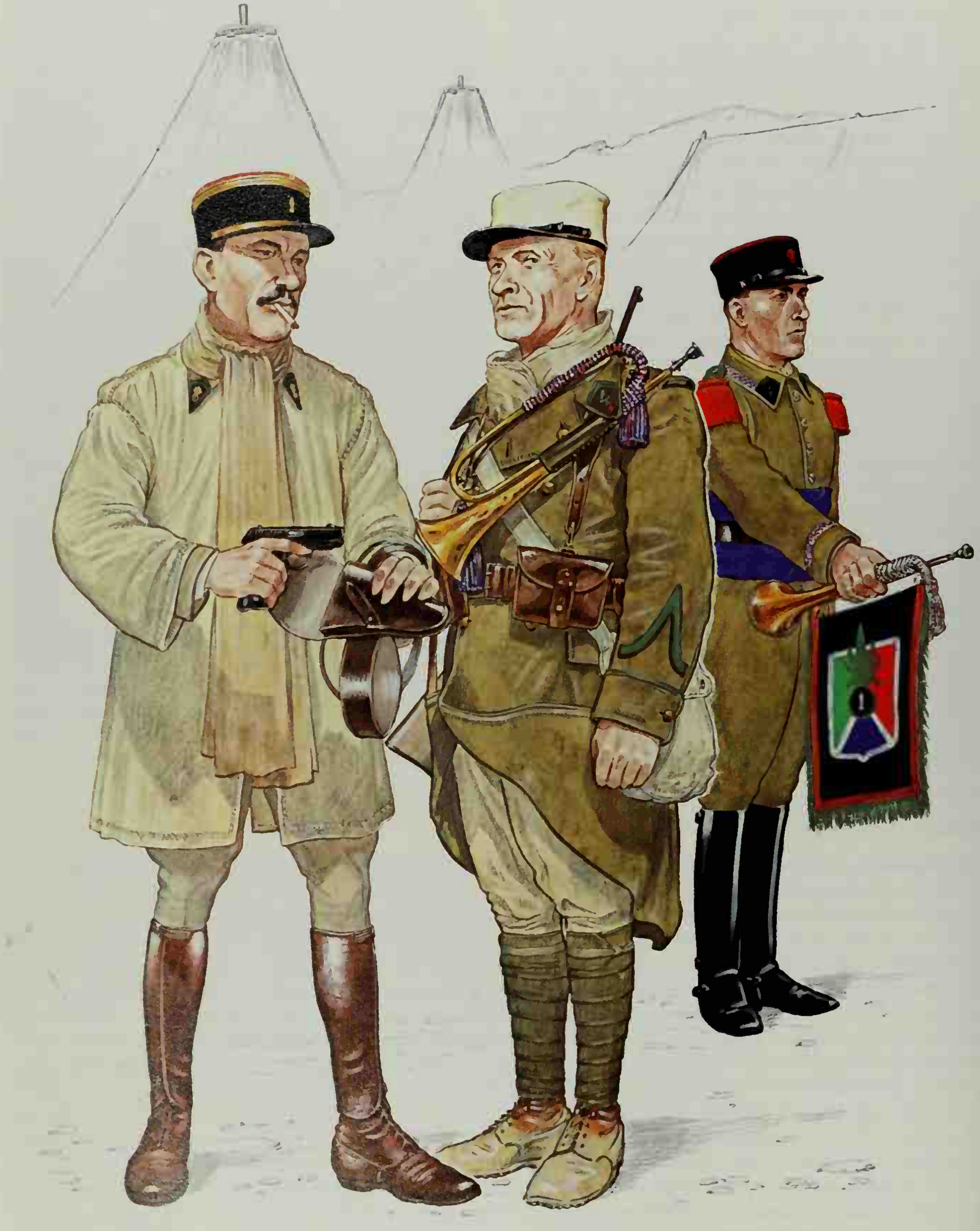


Plate 19: **North Africa, 1930s**

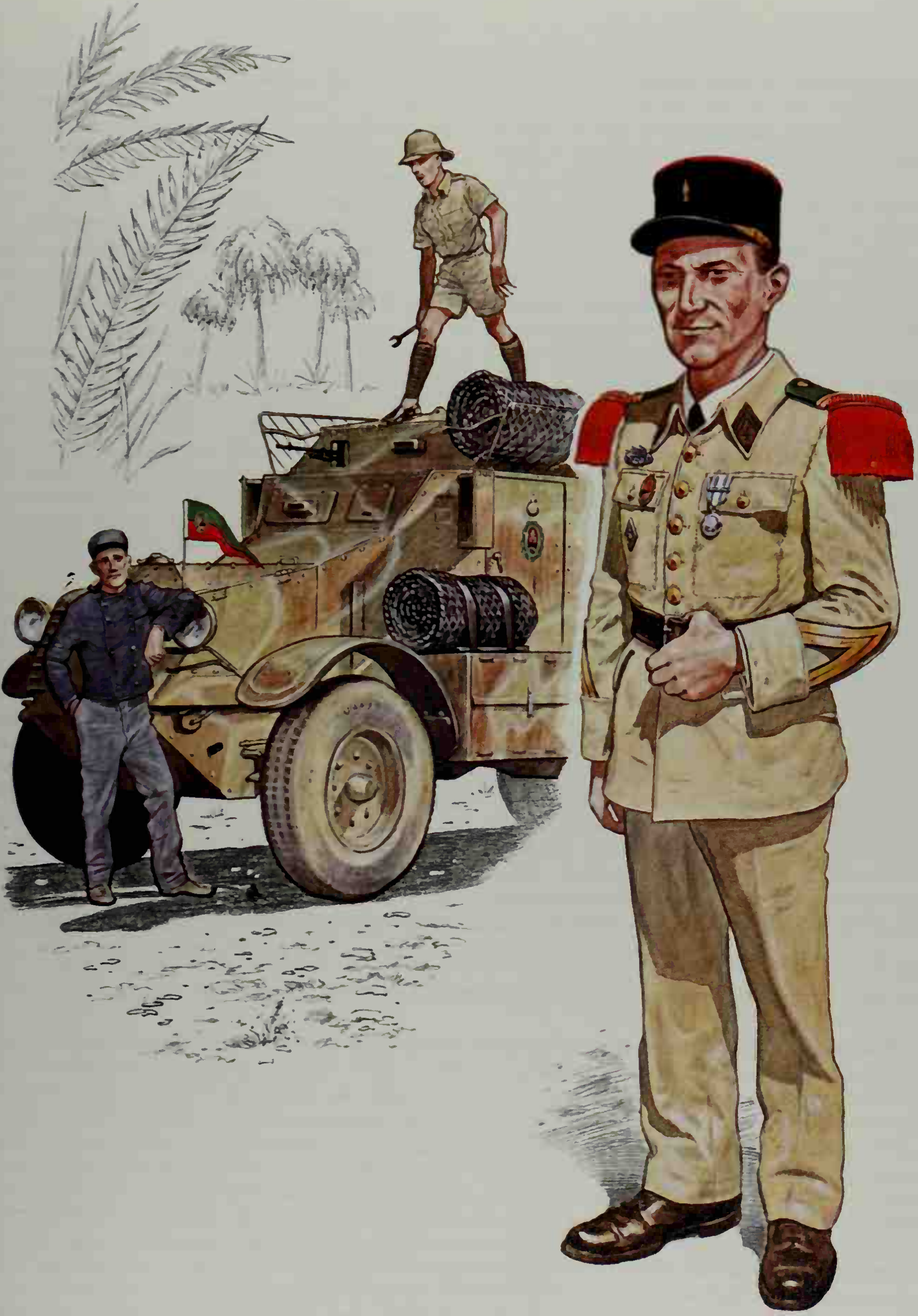


Plate 20: Compagnie Montée Automobile du 4^{e} REI, Morocco, 1930s

notch in the lapel. It was worn with a white shirt and black tie.

In the late 1930s the French Army as a whole received a new tunic for enlisted ranks, the January 1936 model. While basically of unchanged design, its collar was much looser-cut, to expose a pale khaki shirt and tie beneath; there were now six front buttons. This does not seem to have been issued to the Legion before 1940; but in 1938–39 photographs show sergeants in some units wearing the 'December 1920' tunic with the top button open to show a collar and tie when in walking-out and service dress (see Plate 20).

In 1937 Legion units in the south were authorised as everyday and field dress a khaki drill shirt, with breast pockets and shoulderstraps, and shorts. There was also a new issue of sun helmets, of more modern shape, with a broad brim front and back, to these units and to those in Tonkin; the helmet was made with a pale khaki drill covering material. Photographs of the mid-1930s show more frequent use in some units of the khaki *bonnet de police* as undress headgear. An order of 1935, that Legion enlisted ranks were to wear a line of green piping round the top of the tunic and coat cuff, seems to have been obeyed only in the 4^e REI. That regiment also adopted, in about 1938, a system of coloured spots below the green cypher on the collar patch to identify the three battalions — green, red and yellow respectively (see Plate 19, fig. 61).

The use of the bleached khaki drill *képi* cover for all except parade occasions had been becoming more marked as the 1930s progressed; by 1937 it could be seen on the parade squares of some regiments in North Africa (though not, it seems, in Tonkin), and was being made out of white cloth. Between 1937 and 1939 the practice seems to have spread rapidly; and the magnificent Legion contingent which was sent to Paris for the 1939 Bastille Day parade displayed to the public for the first time the white-covered *képi* worn not just as a means of protecting the blue and red material, but as a formal item of uniform distinctive to the Legion. The *'képi blanc'* had passed from front-line folklore into official legitimacy.

Cavalry

The cavalry regiment drew its uniforms and equipment from Chasseurs d'Afrique magazines when it was first raised. The *képi* and tunics did not differ from infantry patterns, apart from the substitution of silver for all gold buttons and lace. The cavalry *culotte* was cut fuller in the thigh than the infantry pattern; at first it bore dark blue seam-piping down the outside leg, but this disappeared gradually after an order of 1923 supressed it. The cavalry greatcoat — *manteau* — was single-breasted, with a fall collar, six silver front buttons, and a long central pleat at the back of the skirt concealing a long vent which could be buttoned closed when appropriate. The skirts could be buttoned back in infantry fashion, and the oblique pocket flaps had a single button. Leather leggings, with three equidistant strap and buckle fastenings down the outside, were worn with regulation laced ankle-boots and cavalry issue spurs. Sources differ on the colour of the leggings and boots; the concensus seems to be that they were brown when first issued but were then

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Plate 20: Compagnie Montée Automobile du 4^e REI, Morocco, 1930s

From the notes, photographs and sketches of Charles Milassin, a veteran of this unit. **63 (Right). Sergent, Tindouf, December 1939:** *Summer walking-out dress, with the taller* képi *of a re-enlisted NCO.* Sous-officiers *followed their officers in adopting an open collar over a shirt and tie. Both green and gold regimental numbers can be seen on the collar* écussons *of a photographed group of NCOs of this unit; but the battalion spot was not worn, nor, apparently, the cuff piping. Chevrons are temporarily hooked to each sleeve. The breast pockets characterised career NCOs' tunics. Above the right pocket is the comet-and-tracks badge of French motorised units. On the flap is the company badge, and below it the regimental badge.* **64 and 65. Légionnaires, Foum el Hassan, 1937:** *Fatigue dress in this company was of blue denim, comprising* képi *cover, short double-breasted jacket and trousers. Khaki shirts and shorts were also worn as campaign, working and barrack dress; espadrilles or* naïls *were worn on most duties; note puttees worn above bare feet and* naïls. *Headgear included the normal* képi; *the mustard-khaki sidecap; and the sun helmet.*

The vehicle is the armoured patrol truck modification of the Panhard AMD 165/175 TOE, with turret removed and a Hotchkiss mounted at right front. The company badge is painted on both doors, and carried on a pennant flying from the radiator: a green cog round a red oval bearing a gold grenade and horseshoe, above a black, white and gold running ostrich.

blackened, while officers and warrant officers wore brown top-boots.

Collar insignia also seem to have varied. On the stand-collar tunic the patch was officially dark blue but occasionally khaki, with green pipings and a white '1' — silver for NCOs. One may assume the same variations on the lozenge-shaped coat *écusson*. An order of May 1926 describes the patches for the new fall-collar tunic as dark blue, piped green, with a green '1' above a green grenade. There are numerous photographic examples of sergeants wearing blue patches with green piping and a simple silver grenade motif, alongside troopers wearing the regulation patch. Bucquoy recorded in 1935 that some khaki-backed patches were in use; and Milassin suggests other occasional variations, such as a blue patch with the cypher below the grenade, and old khaki patches with the white or silver '1' still worn on the greatcoat. Officers and warrant officers wore the silver grenade with the cypher in the 'bomb' on green-piped patches of dark blue, or perhaps occasionally khaki.

Other insignia were as for the infantry, but always with silver replacing the infantry's gold: e.g. the ranking of an *adjudant* in the REC was gold with a red line, that of an *adjudant-chef* was silver with a red line, and that of a *lieutenant-colonel* was silver/gold/silver/gold/silver.

The skirts of the summer-weight drill tunic, and of the winter-weight tunic as well, were tucked into the *culotte* under the blue sash for all orders of dress. The frequency of use of summer-weight drill *culottes* is open to question. Guyader suggests that infantry *culottes* were generally worn in the REC for summer dismounted duty; certainly the winter kahki pattern was worn for mounted duties in all seasons, with both types of tunic. The white fatigue *bourgeron*, tucked into the khaki breeches under the blue sash, was widely used for exercises and on campaign.

The *cheich* was normally worn in the field, either round the neck, often with the ends crossed on the chest, or wrapped around *képi* and neck like a turban, in a style which owed something to the largely White Russian recruitment of the REC in the early 1920s (see Plate 18, fig. 57). The *képi* cover of pale khaki drill or white was worn in Syria with a neck-flap until the 1930s. Examples are known of summer campaign caps devised by fitting the cotton cover itself with a peak and chinstrap, either with or even without a light cardboard former to give it some shape. Guyader has published a photograph showing a trooper with a red cut-out grenade insignia on his *képi* cover, and suggests that this strictly non-regulation practice was not unknown in Legion infantry units of the 1920s.

A garment closely associated with the REC of this period was the *gandourah*, which had been in use in the mounted companies since before World War I, and which became popular in the 1920s with officers of all branches. In the cavalry it was a normal item of summer campaign dress, protecting the uniform, increasing comfort when worn without the tunic in hot weather, and giving an element of camouflage. Closely patterned on native clothing, the *gandourah* was a loose, knee-length robe, usually with long, full-cut sleeves. It was collarless, and had a laced vent down the chest, and further vents at the front and back of the skirts.

Plate 21: Kettledrummers, 1^{er} REC, Sousse, Tunisia, 1937–38

From notes and photographs, Guyader, G d'U no 48, *and from* Sabretasche. **66. Timbalier Billy Pesa, November 1937:** *A Cameroon negro whose accent supported his claim to have been kettledrummer to the Prussian* Leibhusaren *in 1914, Pesa made his public debut in May 1937. Summer sand-khaki and winter mustard-khaki uniforms were identical. Both had NCO's breast pockets, non-regulation NCO collar patches with silver grenades, trooper's epaulettes with green* brides, *and a trooper's 1935* képi *with added silver metal grenade and silver-bordered chinstrap. White crossbelts supported a plaque of the regimental badge, repeated with slight differences on the drum hangings. The bridle throat ornament, a white horsetail, was added in November 1937.* **67. Maréchal des logis Foreau, 14 July 1938:** *This French sergeant wore a career NCO's* képi. *A white uniform of NCO cut had now been issued to the whole* fanfare. *NB We show exposed tunic skirts in error — they were actually tucked under the sashes and breeches. The breeches are better cut than issue* cullotes, *and true riding boots are worn. The NCO epaulettes have silver/red crescents, and the two silver chevrons of this rank were worn on the cuffs, hidden here by the gauntlets, which now have tricolour lace trim. One source gives five green sleeve chevrons; we prefer Guyader's interpretation of tricolour lace. Guyader describes 'a whitened 1916 belt with nickel-plated buckle'. Plaque and crossbelts were unchanged; but Foreau rode a black, with many minor changes in the harness from that of Billy Pesa's grey.*

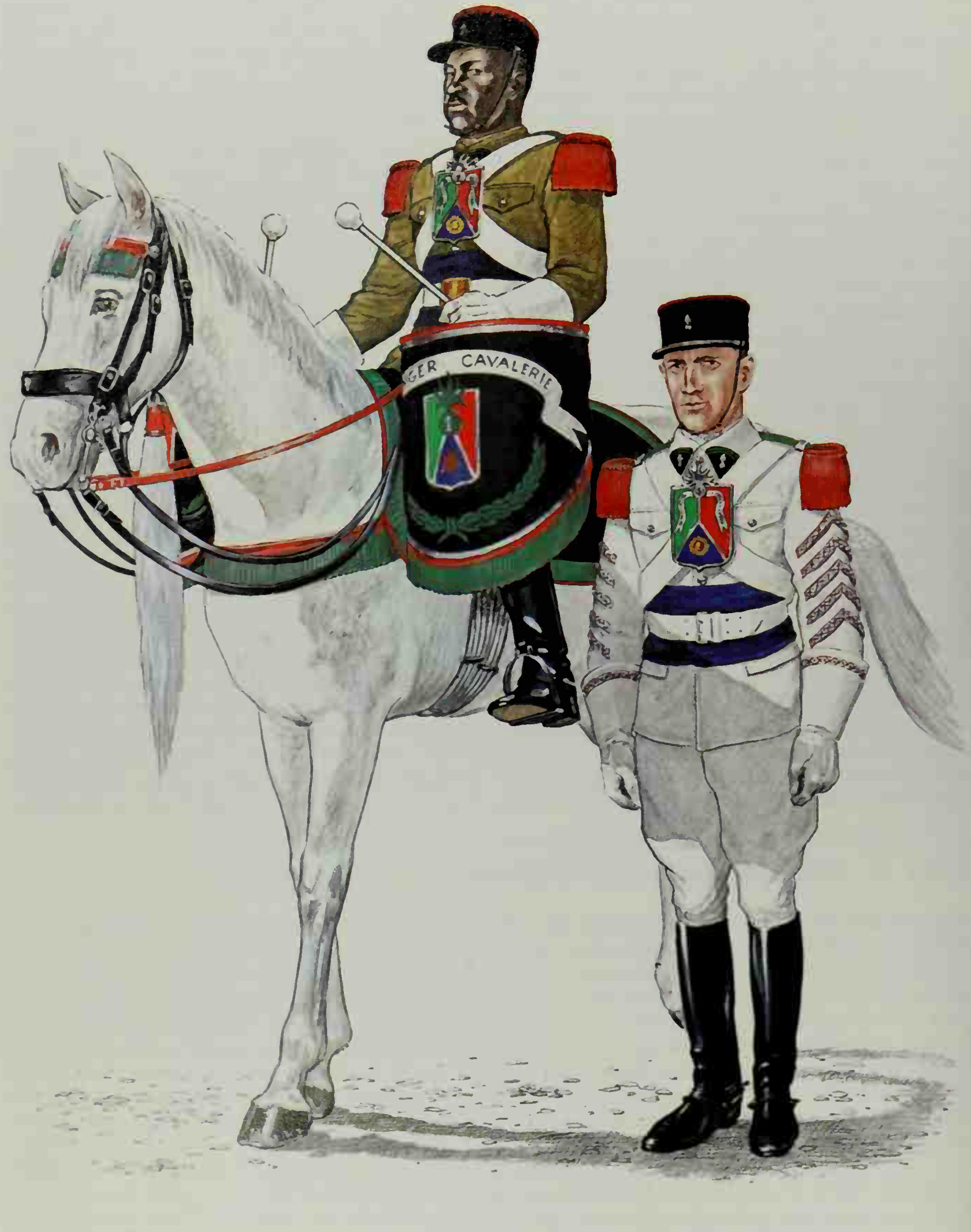
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Plate 21: **Kettledrummers, 1^{er} REC, Sousse, Tunisia, 1937-38**

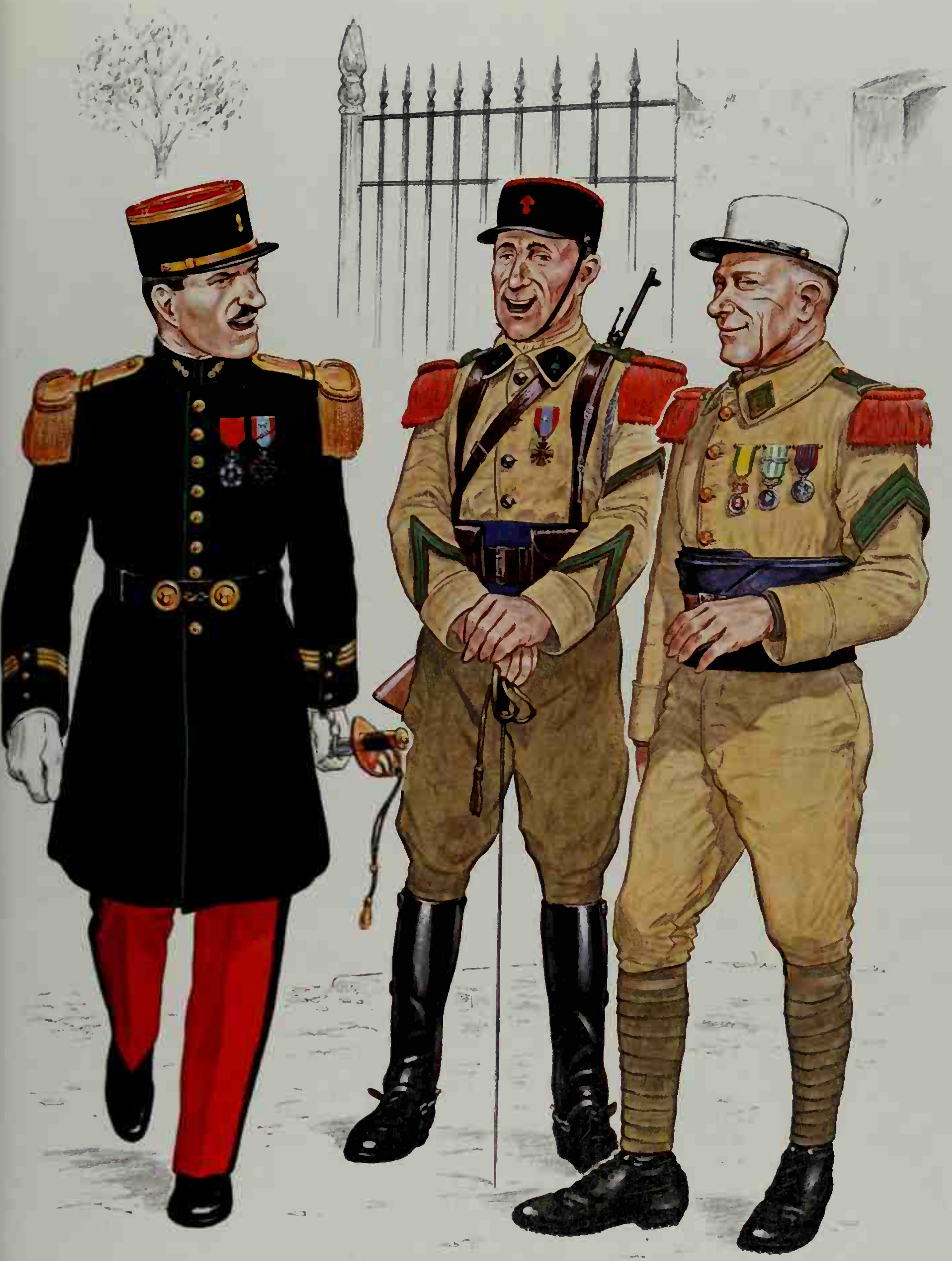
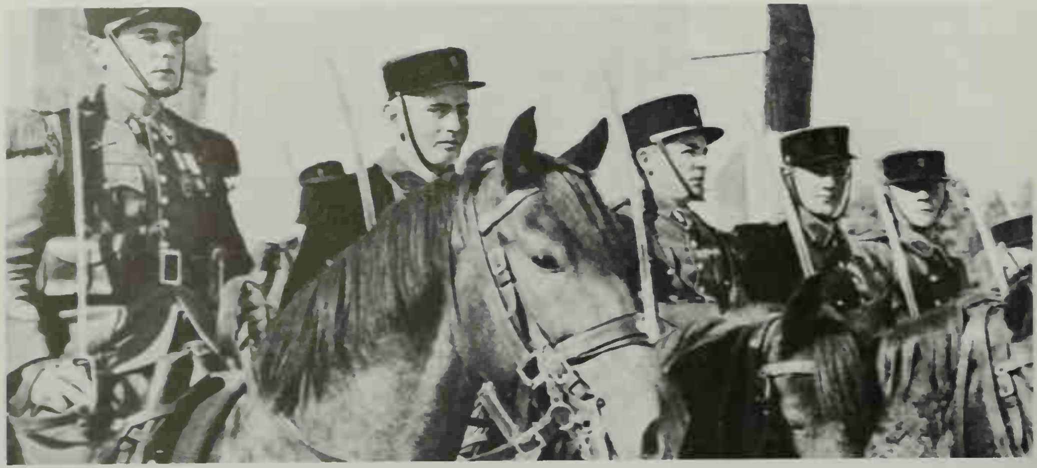


Plate 22: Parade and Walking-out Dress, 1930s



Mounted parade by the 1er REC. The *képi* grenades seem to be still the 20mm version, which would indicate this photograph was taken not much later than 1932. The three silver chevrons of a *maréchal des logis chef* can just be seen above the cuff of the left hand man; he and the NCO third from left wear silver grenades on their collar *écussons*, and silver-edged second chinstraps on their *képis*. The troopers have regulation patches with green cyphers and grenades (R. G. Harris)

The tunic collar was normally worn folded outside it. It was worn under the blue sash and leather equipment, and bore ranking where appropriate in the form of a buttoned chest-tab of blue or khaki cloth with green or silver stripes. It was normally of a pale sandy drill shade, but white ones were quite common.

The horse furniture is illustrated on Plate 18. For parades it was limited to empty front saddle bags, and the rolled coat strapped behind the saddle. The sabre was always carried under the left saddle flap. While enlisted ranks always wore the carbine slung, NCOs normally carried it in a leather holster balancing the sabre on the right side of the saddle. (For minute details of the stowage of cavalry equipment see Guyader, *G d'U no 45*.)

The old colonial helmet had seen some slight use by the cavalry in Syria, and the new type was very

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Plate 22: Parade and Walking-out Dress, 1930s

68. Capitaine of infantry, grande tenue, 1932: *This uniform, from the notes and photographs of Charles Milassin, differs from the general French Army pattern of 1931–32 only in small 'tribal' particulars such as extra green piping at collar, cuffs, front, and* brides. *Officers of the cavalry regiment wore the same uniform with silver distinctions. The parade belt has a single suspender for the 1923 infantry officer's sword. The rear of the coat is cut* à la Soubise, *unpiped, with uniform buttons at top and centre of the patches. The presentation of the Legion's grenade insignia changed gradually over the years, the bottom pair of flames becoming increasingly down-turned, but there was no regulation on this point. NB The cuff patches are shown here too far forward.* **69. Brigadier, 4e Escadron, 1er REC, tenue de parade, summer** circa **1932:** *From notes and photographs, Guyader,* G d'U no 45. *The winter-weight khaki breeches were always worn for mounted duties, with winter- or summer-weight tunics as appropriate. The* képi *chinstrap was worn down for mounted duties. Note hooked-on rank chevrons of 'summer' shape, five years' service chevron of straight shape on left upper arm, regulation 1926 collar patches with green cypher above grenade, slung carbine, and unattached sabre. The 4th Squadron wore the* fourragére *of the* Croix de Guerre TOE, *recalling its gallantry in Syria in the 1920s. This corporal also wears a personal award of the same medal.* 70. **Légionnaire, 1er REI, tenue de sortie, Paris, July 1939:** *From a photograph. A veteran of at least fifteen years' service, wearing the* Médaille *as well as Moroccan and Syrian campaign medals, enjoying some liberty in the capital after the parade at which the public at large first saw the white* képi *cover worn as a formal item of this corps' service uniform, rather than as a campaign expedient.*

occasionally issued for trips to the far South. The steel Adrian helmet, painted dark khaki, had some slight use among the motorised elements of the Foreign Cavalry in the 1930s.

The *'fanfare'* or mounted band was an impressive feature of the ceremonial which marked the feasts of Camerone and St George at the cavalry's Sousse headquarters. The celebration of Camerone on 30 April 1930 saw the first display of a squadron armed with lances, which remained in use for mounted ceremonials of this type throughout the 1930s; the lance was the ordinary French Army model of 1913, with a swallow-tail pennon worn white over red. The mounted kettle-drummers are discussed and illustrated on Plate 21.

Metal insignia

Throughout the French armed forces it was the fashion in the years between the World Wars to wear on the tunic breast metal unit badges. These were designed, purchased and worn according to individual unit custom and at unit expense, being regulated by no central policy. They became official only in the late 1930s, and since then the Legion has displayed an enormous variety of regimental, battalion, and even company badges, often of strikingly attractive design, in gold, silver and multi-coloured enamels.

Although restricted for reasons of space, we have included photographs of a selection of the major variants of the main unit insignia in the final chapter, as a representative sample.

According to *KB*, the first of these insignia to appear in the Legion was that of the 3e REI, dating from 1928. In silver and red, it includes the seven-flame grenade and the motto 'Legio Patria Nostra', a lizard, referring to the regiment's service in Morocco, and the double *fourragère* inherited from the RMLE. The development of Legion insignia continued, in general, the use of certain elements: the grenade, the colours green and red (and blue, in the cavalry), and motifs referring to area of operations and unit function. Examples often encountered are the five-point star or 'seal of Solomon' of Morocco, the dragon of Indo-China, the 'cross of Agadès' associated with the Sahara, and the horseshoe, marking ancestry in the old mounted companies.

Some insignia known to have been in use before World War II are those of the following:

'Compagnie Camerone', 3e Cie, 4e REI	1931
6e Escadron, 1er REC	1932
(possibly 1er and 3e Escadrons also	pre-1936)
Compagnie Montée du 1er REI ('d'Algerie')	1934
Compagnie Montée du 2e REI	1935
I/3e REI	1935
Compagnie Montée Automobile du 4e REI (see Plate 20)	1936
II/4e REI	1936
1er REC	1936
4e REI	1937
Cie de Sapeurs Pionniers du 1er REI	1937
IV/1er REI	1937
IV/5e REI ('Bn Lambert')	1937
II/2e REI	1938
Batterie Saharienne Portée Légion	1939

Plate 23: 13e DBLE, circa 1940

71. Eclaireur-skieur, Narvik, Norway, 1940: *From items in the Legion Museum, and an article in* De Bello no 3, *spring 1974, by François Vauvillier. The khaki beret is pulled right. The* canadienne *of the ski-scout sections is worn, with* pantalon-golf, *short puttees, socks and standard or mountain issue boots. The webbing satchel holds the ANP.31 gasmask. Most of the regiment still wore the old-style pouches, and weapons were a mixture of 1916 carbines and MAS.36 rifles. Note special skiers' rucksack.* **72. Légionnaire, Narvik, Norway, 1940:** *From Vauvillier,* De Bello. *The white helmet-cover was the only camouflage item generally issued. The jacket is the* veste d'automitrailleuse. *Photographs indicate that few, if any, sets of the new leather equipment were issued to the 13e DBLE; the MAS.36 was available in larger quantities. Snowshoes and 'Bergram' rucksack were standard issue.* **73. Commandant, London, early 1940s:** *From a uniform in the Wayne Braby collection, made by Nicolls of Regent Street. The* tenue journalière *of an officer in the late 1930s, worn here by an officer serving with de Gaulle. The tunic today has gold-on-black ranking loops round the shoulderstraps, but also has thread fixings for cuff ranking; photographs show cuff ranking worn in 1940, so we show the earlier style here. The collar patches have grenade and pipings in gold. A whistle chain passes from the right shoulderstrap to the breast pocket. On the left arm only are a gold-embroidered title 'FRANCE', and five gold service 'sardines' over a Cross of Lorraine — surely a temporary and perhaps personal 'fantasy'. (If they follow the old World War I sequence, this would date the tunic to 1943, in which case the ranking would be worn on the shoulderstrap rather than the cuff.) The* képi *grenade bore a regimental cypher from 1935.*

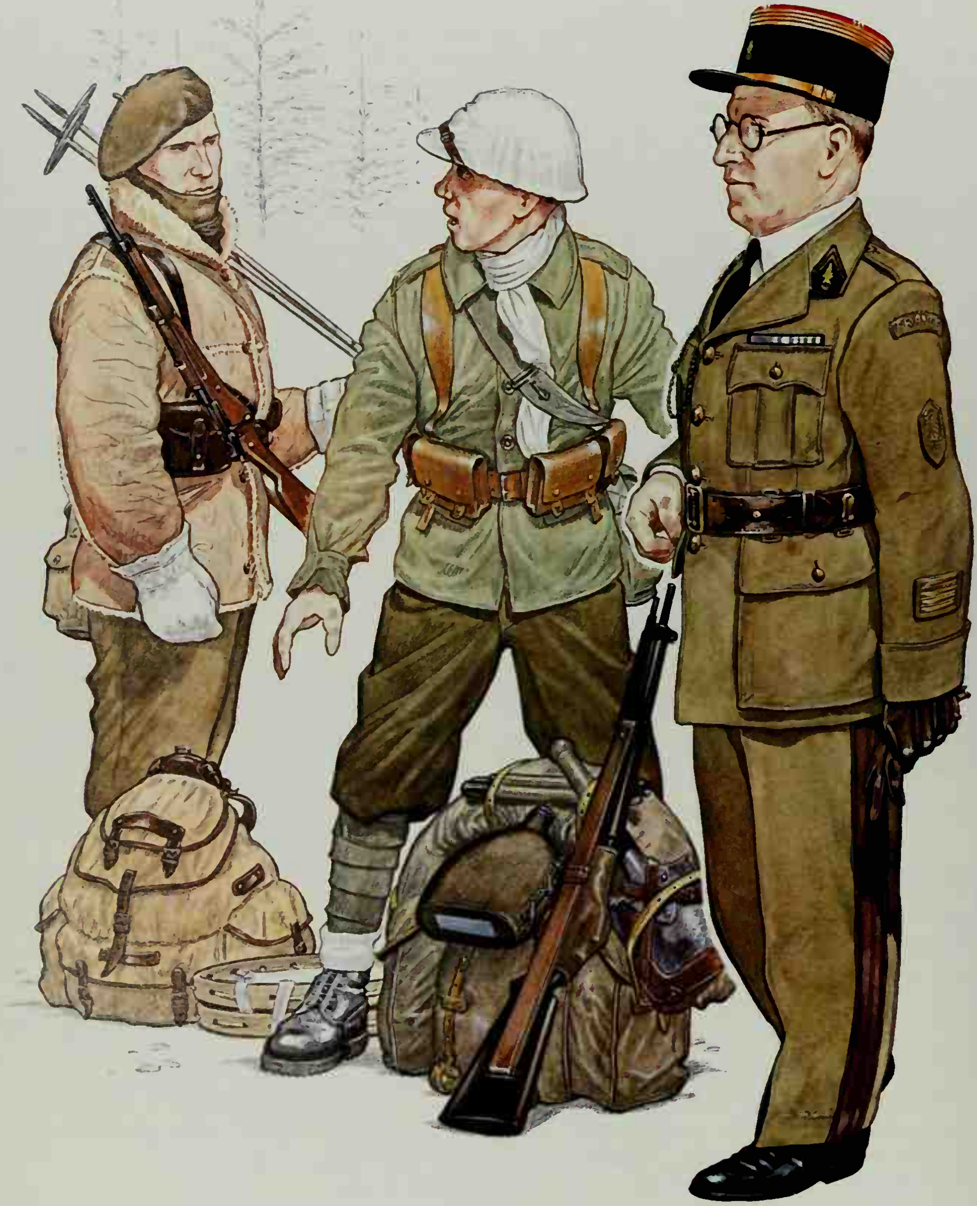

Plate 23: **13e DBLE, circa 1940**

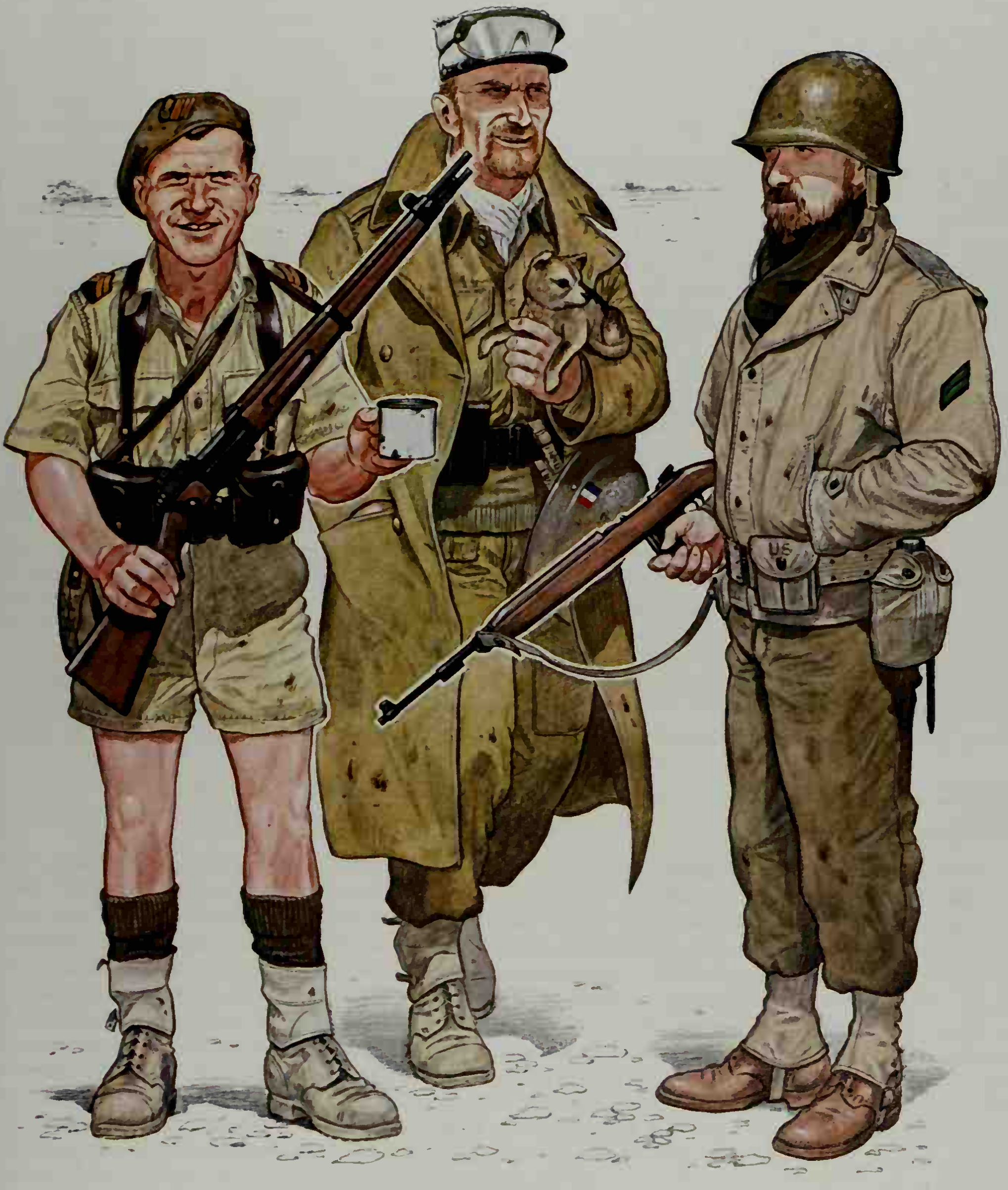

Plate 24: 13^e DBLE and RMLE, 1942-45

8

World War II

The immediate response of Legion authorities to the outbreak of World War II was to round up and intern large numbers of suspects from the ranks — German intelligence had been active within the Legion for some years, and the French had been keeping a close eye on possible subversives. Apparently, the measure was applied in a rather wholesale manner.

A number of new units were raised in France for wartime service. Some 6,000 'duration only' volunteers were enlisted, together with recalled French reservists who had served in the Legion. Drafts of officers, NCOs and veterans were shipped in from Africa to stiffen the new units: the 21ᵉ and 22ᵉ Régiments de Marche de Volontaires Etrangers (October 1939), the 11ᵉ REI (November 1939), the 12ᵉ REI (February 1940), and the 23ᵉ RMVE (May 1940). Generalisations are largely meaningless, but the 11ᵉ and 12ᵉ REI seem to have been rather more combat-ready units than the RMVEs, who were starved of proper equipment and short of good leaders.

Two other units deserve particular mention. The 13ᵉ Demi-Brigade de la Légion Etrangère was formed in February 1940, originally for intervention against the USSR in Finland. The Soviet victory robbed them of that enemy, but their rôle as mountain troops fitted them perfectly for the Allied expedition to Norway. The two battalions of légionnaires, drawn from Algerian and Moroccan garrisons, sailed from Brest on 24 March 1940, joining the Chasseurs Alpins and Poles in Gen Béthouart's 1st French Light Division.

The second unit was a Divisional Reconnaissance Group for the 7th North African Infantry Division in France provided by the Legion cavalry. This light mobile unit, designated GERD 97, was formed from the 2nd Squadron of the 1ᵉʳ REC, the instruction squadron from Sidi-bel-Abbès, and a motorcycle squadron, with most of the officers and NCOs drawn from the 2ᵉ REC. It joined the 7th Division in France in March 1940.

The 13ᵉ DBLE fought with great effect at Bjervik on 13 May 1940, and at Narvik at the end of the month; the 2nd Company lost all its officers and 60 men, but the Germans were driven back

Plate 24: 13ᵉ DBLE, and RMLE, 1942–45

74. Sergent, 13ᵉ DBLE, Bir Hakeim, February 1942: *This and the next figure are composites, taken from group and individual photographs now in the Imperial War Museum, London. Note interesting beret, with gold wire grenade and cypher cut from an officer or warrant officer's collar patch, and length of double gold rank lace. Gold ranking chevrons are worn on blue loops on the shoulderstraps. British KD shirts and shorts, hosetops, web anklets and boots are worn with old French leather equipment and canteen; the MAS.36 was the standard weapon. The Free French shoulder patch described in the text was not often seen on the shirt, but it was not unknown; a photograph taken in Damascus in summer 1941 shows the drummers of the 13ᵉ wearing it on the left shirt sleeve.* **75. Légionnaire, 13ᵉ DBLE, Bir Hakeim, February 1942:** *The only French items are the battered white-covered* képi, *worn here with British gas goggles, the* cheich *and the leather equipment. Greatcoat, battledress, sweater, anklets, boots and steel helmet are all British issue. Note cut-out green grenades on khaki diamonds on blouse and coat collars, and tricolour flash on helmet.* **76. Caporal, RMLE, Vosges, winter 1944–45:** *A composite from photographs, and from eye-witness sketches by Capt Hallo published in the* L d'O(2) *and* (3). *Only the green rank diagonals on the left sleeve, and the toleration of the full beard, indicate that this is a légionnaire rather than a GI. (The M1 carbine clearly identifies an opportunist, however – apparently they were sought-after, and were normally the prerogative of the senior NCO section leader.)*

right to the Swedish frontier. The imminent collapse of the French Army at home led to the recall of the 13e, and they reached Brest just as it became clear that nothing was to be gained by fighting for Rennes as first planned. With arms and equipment intact, the 13e DBLE re-embarked for Britain. There, at the end of June 1940, they were given the choice of staying with de Gaulle's Free French forces or of being repatriated to French North Africa, which remained unoccupied by the Germans. About half chose repatriation; the rest, under Lt-Col Magrin-Vernerey — 'Monclar' — stayed in Britain. (They were briefly designated 14e DBLE, until it was learned in November that the elements which had returned to Morocco had been dispersed and the old number was thus 'vacant' again.)

The 11e REI saw uncomfortable service in Lorraine in winter 1939–40, digging and patrolling before the Maginot Line. As part of the 6th North African Infantry Division, it was moved to Stenay after the German break-through at Sedan; on 27 May 1940 a massive German attack hit its positions at Inor Wood, between the Meuse and the Chiers. It was held, with heavy loss. On 11 June the regiment was ordered to fall back. After a brief halt near Douaumont, on the sacred World War I battlefield of Verdun, they were once more pulled back. On 18 June they were almost encircled at Saint-Germain-sur-Meuse, and the II/11e sacrificed itself to cut a way out for the rest of the unit. In expectation of a final stand the regimental colour was burn; but the enemy did not advance at once, and the 11e was pulled back once again, towards Toul. Reduced to 25 per cent of establishment by the time of the French armistice, the 11e REI was disbanded. Of the 700 internees more than half escaped and rejoined the Legion in Africa before the end of 1940.

The 12e REI was posted to the 8th Infantry Division, defending Soissons; on 6 June the Germans subjected it to an ordeal by artillery and air attack which knocked out a third of its strength in a single day, and by the night of the 7th the regiment was surrounded. A small part of the regiment managed to slip through the German line and retreat. The running fight ended with the armistice, which found the last 300 men about 24kms (15 miles) from Limoges.

The three RMVEs, largely composed of East European refugees and Spanish Republicans officered by French reservists, were also roughly handled. Posted to the Ardennes, the 21e broke under heavy German attack on 9–10 June and was not engaged again. The 22e fought rather more stubbornly near Péronne, in a see-saw fight for Berny and Villiers-Carbonnel beginning on 24 May; their offensive spirit was still intact when they were hit by German armour, and smashed. The 23e, even worse equipped than the other units, still managed to delay German Panzers for two days at Pont-sur-Yonne on 15–16 June, but was then pushed into retreat. The failure of these three regiments to make much impression was completely understandable — no great effort had been made to ready them for serious operations, and they had little more than individual courage to count on.

Plate 25: Indo-China, 1946–50

77. Légionnaire, 2e REI, 1948: *From photographs, and a plate in* L d'O(2). *The fabric bush hat is worn here with British KD shirt and re-cut shorts, a French belt, and US canteen and webbing Thompson magazine pouches. This type of light equipment was typical of local operations in the late 1940s.* **78. Sergent of infantry, circa 1950:** *From photographs, and items in the author's collection. The 1946 green combat fatigue suit, which began to be seen in large numbers in Indo-China from* circa *1950. This NCO in barracks dress wears only one item of insignia — the left sleeve* écusson *and rank chevrons, fixed under the left pocket flap.* **79. Lieutenant-colonel, 13e DBLE, 1948:** *Typical white undress uniform. Details varied; this is from a photograph of the C.O. of the 13e, Lt Col de Sairigné, killed in March 1948. Note sleeve* écusson *with gold grenade and green pipings, and shoulder ranking in the sequence gold/silver/gold/silver/gold.* **80. Adjudant-chef, 2e REI, 1948:** *From items in the author's collection, and the notes of Charles Milassin. Regimentally-authorised white walking-out dress for officers, warrant officers and sergeants, worn with the green and red sidecap which 'hung over' from the RMLE. It bears 'fantasy' decorations apart from the red/gold ranking lace worn* en chevron. *The white duck uniform, with removable buttons and insignia, bears midnight blue shoulderboards of rank, a regimental badge on a fob from the pocket, an early example of the sleeve* écusson *with chevrons of piping instead of complete edging, and this regiment's* Croix de Guerre TOE fourragère. *The uniform is worn with dark green tie and socks. When worn by sergeants it bore chevrons on the left arm only.*

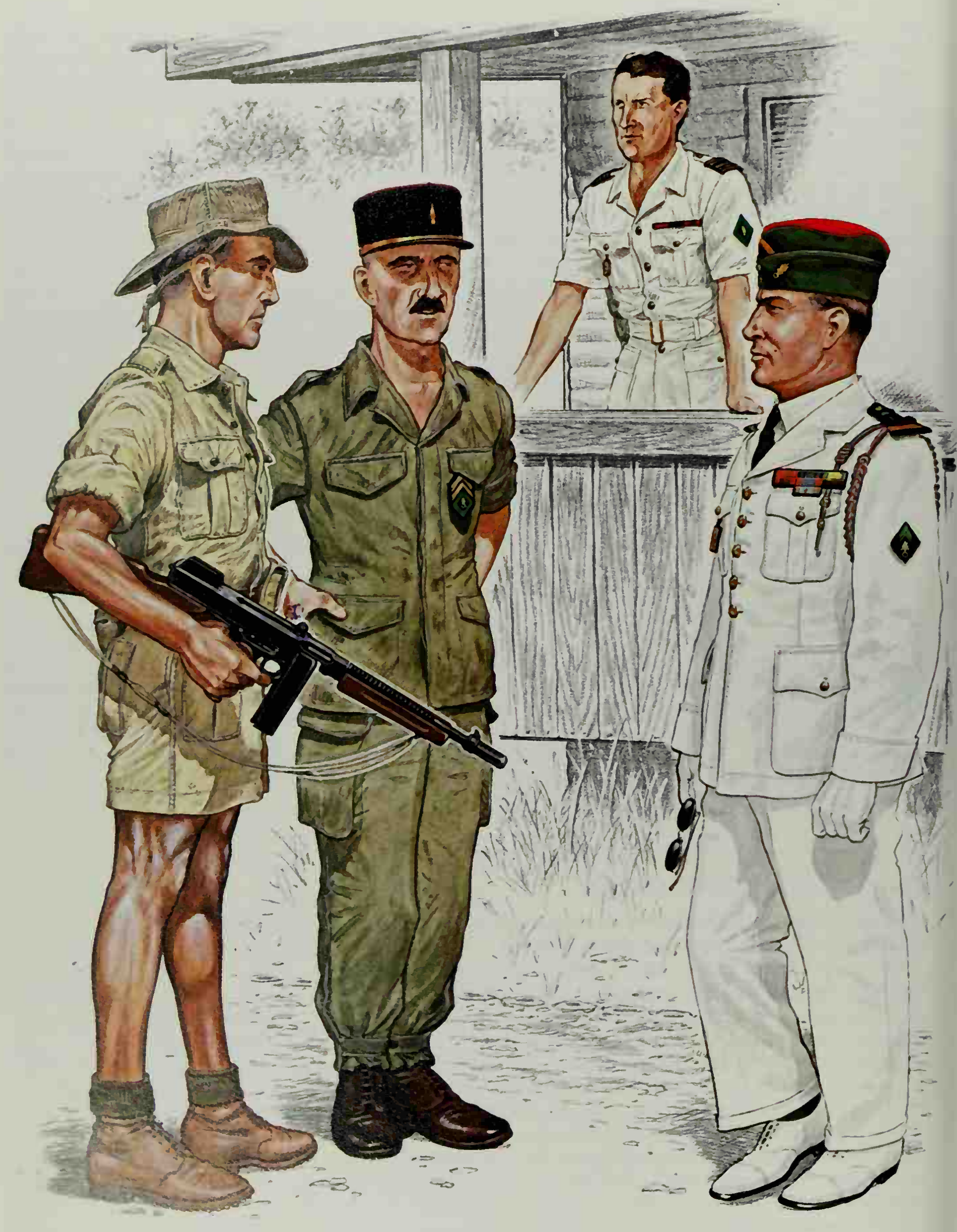

Plate 25: Indo-China, 1946-50

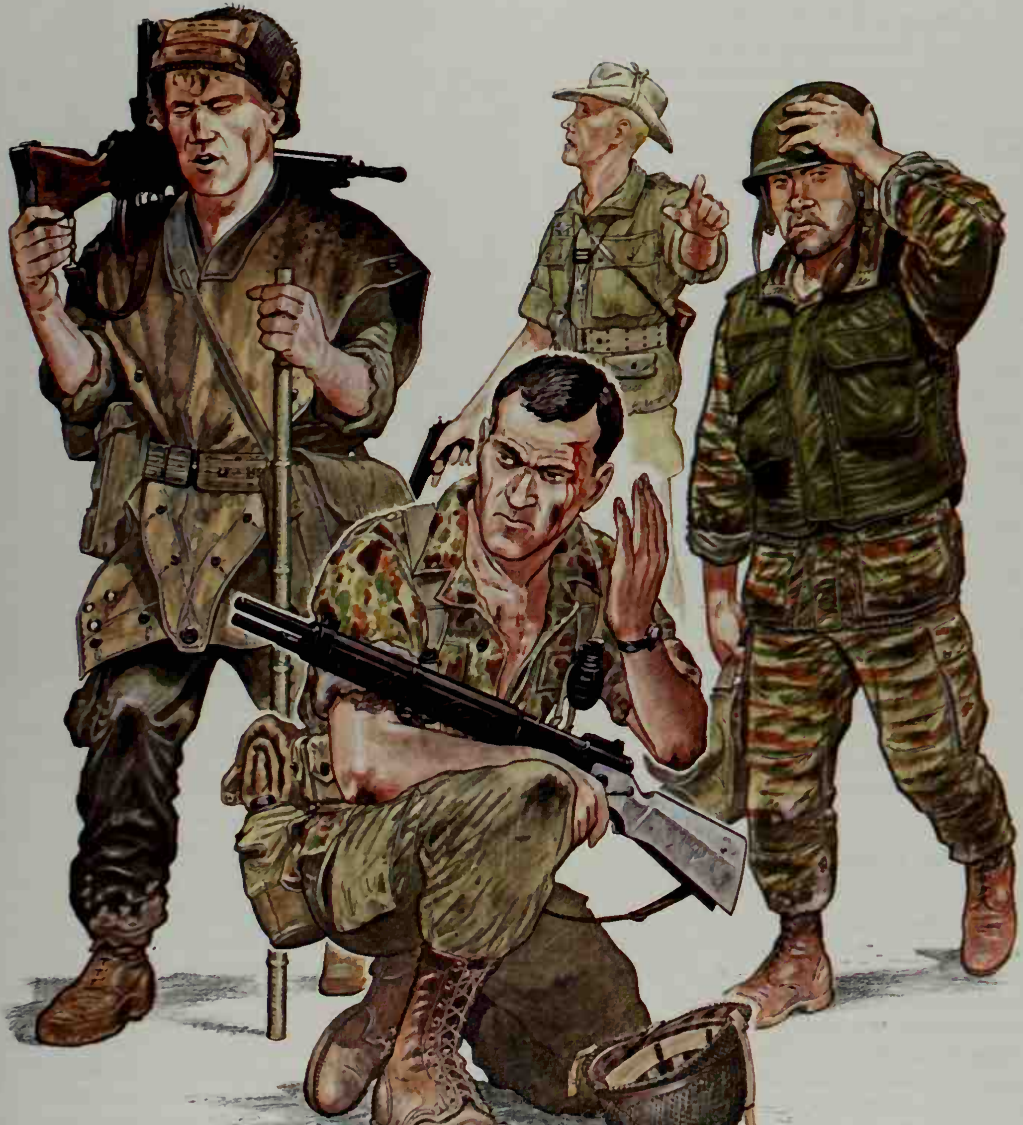

Plate 26: Tonkin, 1952-54

More obviously impressive was the brief career of GERD 97, which fought a stubborn battle in retreat from 17 May until the armistice. Outclassed in all types of equipment by the German armoured formations, it nevertheless made repeated delaying stands throughout the retreat, notably at Epinancourt, Béthencourt, Barleux, Belloy-en-Santerre, and Quesnel. In the woods of Noroy and Ravenel on 9 June it was torn to pieces during a hopeless counter-attack to cover the retreat of its division. Grimly contesting the Oise and Seine crossings, GERD 97 had been reduced by the time of the cease-fire of 25 June from 23 officers and 650 men to 12 officers and 250 men.

* * *

On 15 February 1941 the 13ᵉ DBLE disembarked at Port Sudan to take part in the British assault on Italian-held Eritrea. They went into action on 1 March, taking Enghiahat on the 27th. They entered Keren the next day. On 7 April they took the strong Italian position at Montecullo, and the port of Massawa fell shortly afterwards. On 8 June 1941, with the Damascus column of the Franco-British army, they crossed from Jordan into Syria.

There followed a traumatic episode. Syria was defended by Vichy French garrisons, who fought honourably in obedience to their legal government. The main unit involved was the 6ᵉ REI, which had been formed on 2 October 1939 from the battalions of the 1ᵉʳ and 2ᵉ REI stationed in the Levant. (This command included an autonomous artillery unit, the Groupe Autonome d'Artillerie de Levant, of three batteries largely manned by légionnaires.) Both Free French and Vichy French

Splendid study of a veteran NCO of the newly formed 13ᵉ DBLE, still wearing his old 1ᵉʳ REI insignia as he leaves Sidi-bel-Abbès for France early in March 1940. (ECPA)

Plate 26: Tonkin, 1952–54

81. Légionnaire, 3ᵉ REI, 1952: *From photographs, and items in the author's collection. Wet-season combat dress: US-type steel helmet, 1946 green fatigues,* pataugas, *and shelter-half worn as a poncho. Webbing is a mixture of US and British 1937 items; the pouch from the latter set is retained for magazines for the FM.24/29.* **82. Légionnaire, 1ᵉʳ BEP, 1952–54:** *From photographs, and items in the author's collection. The combination of US World War II vintage Pacific theatre camouflage jacket, and French green fatigue trousers, seems characteristic of this battalion. The webbing is US World War II issue, and the weapon is the folding-stock CR.39.* **83. Lieutenant, Foreign Legion Paratroops, 1952–53:** *From* Sabretasche, *and a uniform in the Legion Museum. An officer on a ground operation, wearing an airborne combat jacket in drab green, but cut like the later camouflaged version. Note paratroop brevet worn on right breast, and rank tab on left.* **84. Légionnaire, CEPML, Dien Bien Phu, 1954:** *From photographs, descriptions, and items in the author's collection. The three Legion mortar companies were important elements of the defence of the airhead, and suffered heavy shell-splinter casualties due to their relatively static and exposed posts. One source states that late in the siege a batch of US M.1952 Armour Vests was air-dropped and distributed among gun and mortar crews, but the author has not found independent confirmation. All Legion paras seem to have received French 1947/52 camouflage clothing at the end of the 1953, and wore it at Dien Bien Phu.*

légionnaires fought with courage and undiminished determination. Casulaties were significant; but it is pleasant to record that each side treated wounded and prisoners as legionnaires first and enemies second. The peace of Saint-Jean-d'Acre on 14 July 1941 ended this fractricidal campaign. The men of the 6^{e} REI were given the option of joining the Free French or being repatriated. About 1,000 men and two officers joined the 13^{e} DBLE, which now formed a third battalion. The remainder were shipped to France, and later to North Africa. The 6^{e} REI was disbanded, most of its remaining personnel going to the depleated 1er REI at Sidi-bel-Abbès.

The Legion in French North Africa had been cautiously finding an accommodation with the new regime. Germany did not interfere with France's African possessions, although officials of various Reich agencies were empowered to inspect and to ask questions, and generally to make themselves obnoxious. The Legion generally kept calm and adopted a pose of co-operation. In the immediate aftermath of the armistice there had been some unrest; the position of many légionnaires who had enlisted 'for the duration only' was now unclear, and those who pressed their claims for discharge too vigorously were harshly treated, being transferred to grim Saharan labour camps. Once calm was restored, a pattern emerged. The visits of German commissioners charged with combing the Legion for men upon whom the Reich wanted to lay its claws tended to coincide with the departure of carefully selected groups on long desert training marches.

The posting of a given man to a given unit became a matter of some finesse. Drafts to Tonkin were used to keep men out of sight of the Germans. The Compagnie Saharienne Portée de la Légion, the desert patrol unit formed in October 1940 from the old Compagnie Automobile of the 1er REI at Tabelbala, was also a useful repository, as were the two new Batteries Sahariennes, formed at Ouargla (October 1940) and Ft Flatters (April 1941). The 4^{e} REI was disbanded in November 1940, its personnel passing to the 2^{e} REI; but a new 4^{e} Demi-Brigade was formed in August 1941, being shipped far south to Senegal, where it stayed in quiet obscurity until February 1943. The 2^{e} REI stayed in Morocco, and formed its own artillery group. The 3^{e} REI also remained in Morocco, the 1er REC in Tunisia, and the 1er REI in Algeria, but the young 2^{e} REC was disbanded. All units, naturally enough, were hard pressed for recruits to maintain their strength.

Despite the efforts of the Legion, the Nazis combed out some 2,000 German légionnaires. Germans had been urged not to join the Legion for some years before the war, and these recalcitrants were given a rough reception as unpatriotic elements. The bulk of them later fought the Allies, with honour, in the *Afrika Korps* regiment *Infanterie-Regiment Afrika (mot) 361,* part of the 90th Light Division.

Meanwhile the 13^{e} DBLE, now commanded by Lt-Col Amilakvari, a Georgian nobleman who had served in the Legion since 1924, was posted north to Egypt at the end of 1941. After a brief period at Halfaya Pass the Free French Brigade, of which the 13^{e} now formed half the infantry strength, was given the task of fortifying and occupying the position of Bir Hakeim at the southern tip of the 8th Army's Gazala Line defences. From February

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Plate 27: Algeria, 1957–59

85. Lieutenant, 13^{e} DBLE, Kabylia, 1959: *From a photograph in* L d'O(3), *and items in the author's collection. On operations, officers often wore their* képis *with pale sand-khaki covers; it was common to see holes cut to expose the gold grenade and a section of rank lace. Note gold chinstrap worn over cover. Standard green fatigues are worn with a shirt, a* cheich *(more usually white for officers), and M.1952 French* 'ranger' *boots. Ranking is worn on the shoulderstraps in the form of one-piece cut-out gold clips.* **86. Radio operator, 13^{e} DBLE, Kabylia, 1959:** *A composite, from the same sources as the previous figure. The sand-khaki general service beret is worn with green fatigues and* rangers. *The M1 .30 calibre carbine was still used by paratroops, vehicle crews, radio operators, etc. The radio is strapped between the body and the rucksack.* **87. Légionnaire, 1er REP, Algiers, 1957:** *From photographs, and items in the author's collection. Photographs show only minimal equipment carried on urban security duty — a pair of webbing MAT.49 magazine pouches behind the hips, a knife and the sub-machine gun. From the start of the Algerian War the parachute battalions — later, regiments — wore standard French airborne* 'tenue léopard'. *The green beret with the silver airborne forces badge was worn by the Legion in preference to the camouflaged 'Bigeard cap' used by other paratroopers. When operating in the* 'bled', *as was normally the case, the paratroop regiments wore the full range of protective jackets, etc, issued to other types of unit.*

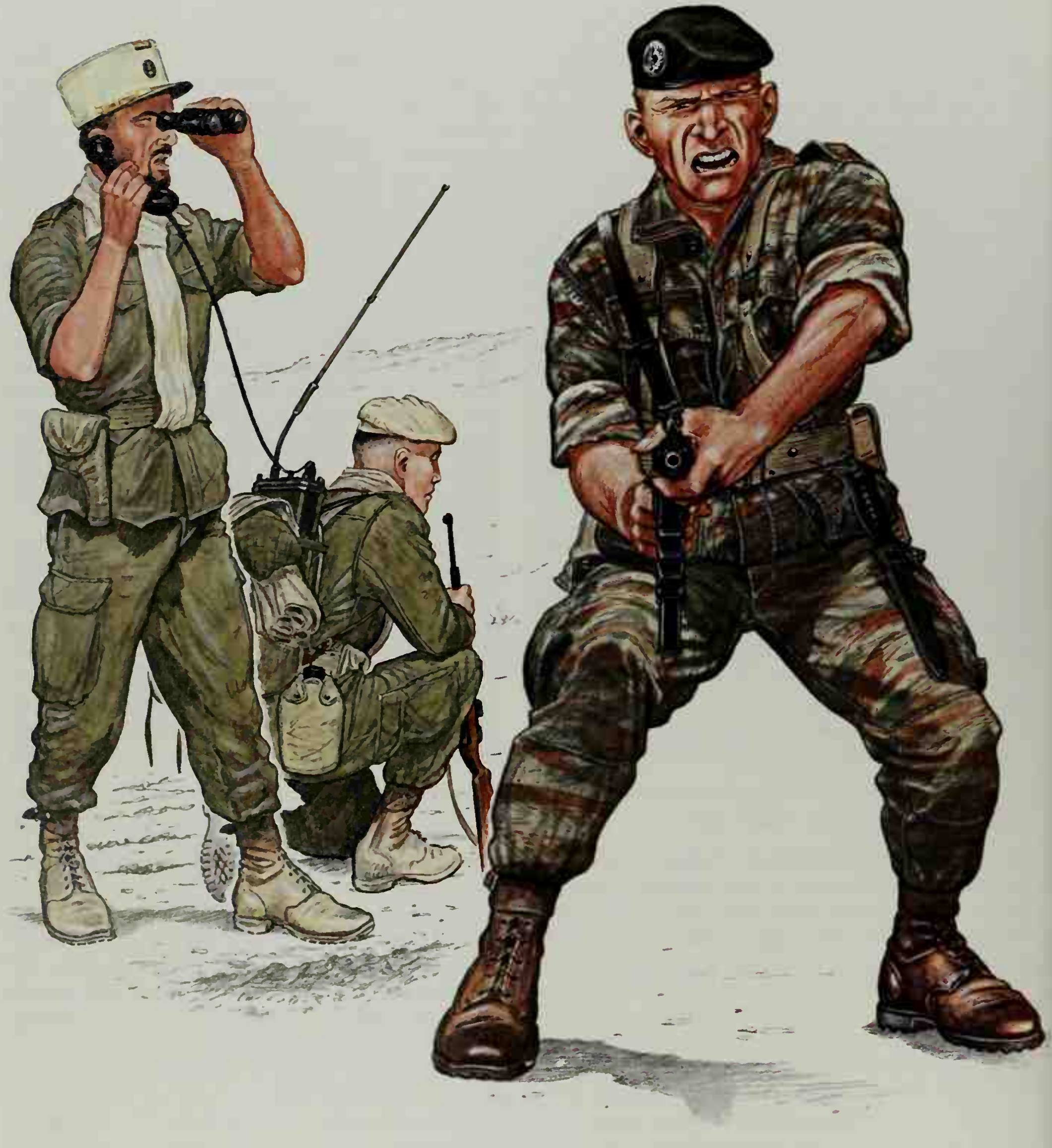

Plate 27: **Algeria, 1957-59**

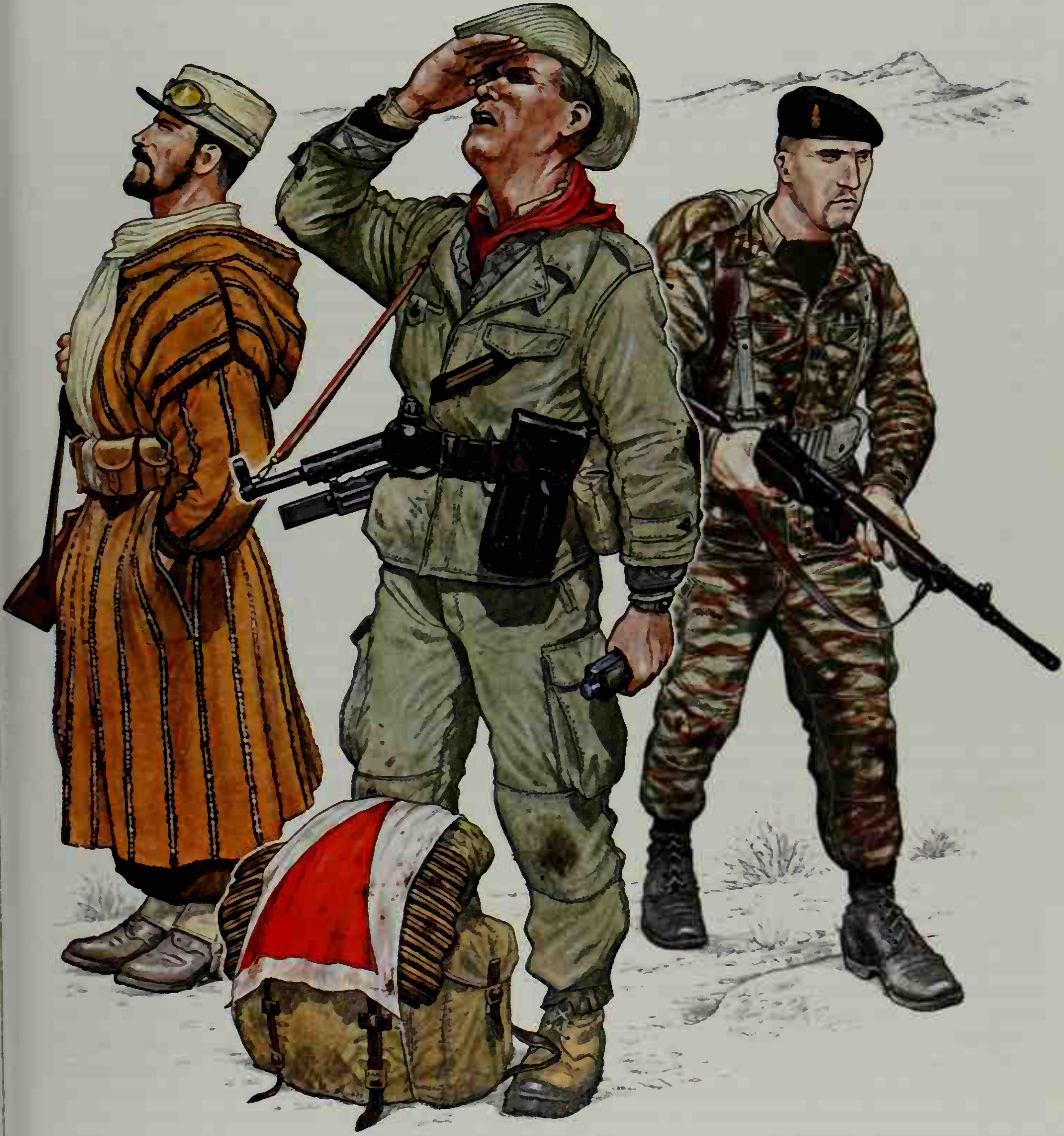

Plate 28: Algeria, 1955-61

to May 1942 the légionnaires dug like terriers, and protected the largely featureless patch of desert with some 50,000 mines. The brigade had picked up a number of French 75mm guns in Syria, and these were backed by anti-tank weapons; there was also an issue of Bren gun carriers, in which the Legion patrolled far and wide.

On 26 May Rommel launched his attack on the Gazala Line. His tanks penetrated each side of Bir Hakeim, and began a series of confused battles with dispersed British forces which ended in the destruction of most of the Allied armour. Bir Hakeim was left alone initially, but later came to be seen as a threatening enclave astride Rommel's lines of supply. An Italian armoured attack on the position on 27 May was driven off with vigour, and 32 tanks of the Ariete Division were destroyed. For some days French patrols ranged the surrounding desert, and it had begun to seem that the initiative might be swinging to the Allies when, on 2 June, a second violent attack fell on the position. Bir Hakeim was surrounded, shelled, and bombed by Stukas. A demand for surrender was rejected; night convoys managed to take out French wounded and bring in ammunition, but from 8 June onwards the enemy attacks were continuous. The attackers were the Italian Trieste Division, and the crack German 90th Light — in which served, ironically, many ex-légionnaires. Supported by heavy artillery, tanks and dive-bombers, the *Afrika Korps* closed its fist on Bir Hakeim. The defence was courageous and determined, but the issue was not seriously in doubt. On the night of 9 June the commander, General Koenig, was given radio permission to break out to the east. This was no easy task, and a fierce battle broke out before dawn on the 11th when the Legion smashed a path through enemy lines behind a wedge of armoured carriers. At some cost the break-out was achieved, and the survivors rendezvoused successfully with a British column some miles away. The garrison's casualties had been just short of 1,000. The stout defence of Bir Hakeim, ending in a successful break-out to rejoin the Allied army, was an important boost for the reputation and morale of the Free French.

At El Alamein the Legion was committed to a costly attack on German positions at El Himeimat on 23 October. The most mourned casualty was Col Amilakvari, who was killed by a shell-burst. The 13^{e} DBLE remained with 8th Army throughout its advance along the coast to Tunisia.

After an initial period of confusion, the Anglo-American landings in French North Africa allowed the bulk of the Legion to fight with the Allies for the first time. They were severely handicapped by their archaic equipment, but not by any lack of enthusiasm. Various field commands were hastily assembled in December 1942. From troops at Sidi-bel-Abbès, and the 4^{e} DBLE, returned from Senegal, the '1er REI de Marche' was formed. Elements of the 2^{e} and 3^{e} REI brought from Morocco made up the '3^{e} REI de Marche'; and the 1er REC fielded a small mobile group with one armoured car squadron and one lorried infantry squadron. The French forces were thrown into the attack to harass Rommel's preparations in Tunisia until the weight of the Anglo-American and British 8th Armies could be brought to bear. The cavalry group fought with success at Foum el Gouafel on 11 January. The 3^{e} REI de Marche was heavily engaged at Djebel Mansour in the first half of the month, suffering significant casualties. The 1er REI de Marche, later into action than the other

Plate 28: Algeria, 1955–61

88. Légionnaire, CSPL, Sahara, circa 1955: *From photographs, and a plate in* L d'O(3). *Winter campaign dress: sandy-drill* képi *cover, with the goggles typical of motorised units,* cheich, *1946 battledress blouse with* seroual *trousers of similar material, native* djellabah, *and leather 1946 belt equipment, here without shoulder braces.* **89. Sergent, 2^{e} REI, Djebel Chemarik, May 1960:** *A composite, from two photographs. Winter campaign dress: bush hat, green fatigues worn over shirt, sweater, and green quilted wind-jacket, and* pataugas. *A leather magazine pouch for the MAT.49 is worn on the belt, with two 'offensive' grenades painted red-brown. A bright bandana was often worn at neck or shoulder as a temporary 'field sign' — the ALN used much French and other very similar combat clothing. Rank is indicated by two gold diagonals on a blue chest-tab. An air recognition panel is taped to the rucksack.* **90. Légionnaire, 3^{e} REI, Aurès Mountains, spring 1961:** *From photographs in* KB. *The green beret was now universal, worn with a brass cut-out grenade badge in the infantry. The infantry version of the camouflaged fatigues have concealed buttons rather than snap-fasteners, and tabbed storm-cuffs rather than elastics. The* rangers *are now blackened; French webbing is worn, with the rucksack; the rifle is the self-loading FSA.49/56.*

units, distinguished itself at Pont du Fahs and Zaghouan in May, by which time some Allied weapons and equipment had been handed over to Legion units. The 13^e DBLE, advancing from the east, fought at Djebel Garci.

A lull of several months followed the Axis surrender in Africa. The US Army took over the uniforming and equipping of French forces, and a period of training and reorganisation was clearly necessary. The 13^e DBLE remained independent of the other units, and went to Italy with 5th Army in April 1944, fighting with particular distinction at Radicofani on 18 June. On 16 August 1944 the 1st Free French Division landed in France at last, near St Tropez, to serve with 1st Army. The 13^e DBLE reached Lyon on 3 September, and Autun on the 9th. At Haute-Saône they ran into their comrades of the Legion cavalry regiment.

The REC now formed the reconnaissance regiment of the French 5th Armoured Division, whose main infantry element was the Régiment de Marche de la Légion Etrangère — a reborn RMLE, inheritor of the flag of the 3^e REI and the traditions of the World War I unit. It had been formed from légionnaires and officers of the 2^e, 3^e, 4^e and (former) 6^e REIs at Sidi-bel-Abbès on 1 July 1943; equipped and trained in Morocco, it landed near Toulon in late September 1944. The advance north was at first without incident; but early in November the RMLE had a hard fight to capture the well-defended German positions in and around Belfort, historic bastion of Alsace. At the beginning of February 1945 their advance ran into another formidable obstacle at Colmar, which was taken at some cost. On 20 March the RMLE began to cross into Germany. The Siegfried Line was penetrated, and in the first few days of April the Rhine was crossed. Town after town fell in bitter but short-lived battles, and the advance swept on into the heart of Germany. The RMLE reached Stuttgart on 21 April 1945, and the Danube — at Tuttlingen — two days later. The German surrender found them at Arlberg in the Tyrol.

The 13^e DBLE had fought close to their comrades of the REC and RMLE throughout most of these battles. They were committed at Strasbourg, Colmar, and in the Alps, at one point actually crossing into Italy in some of the last battles of the war in the West. VE-Day found them in the smiling countryside of Provence, and was celebrated by a magnificent parade through Nice. It was a fitting end to their five-year crusade.

Another Legion unit whose part in World War II must be recorded, however briefly, was the 5^e REI — the Regiment of Tonkin. Its unhappy lot had been to watch helplessly as Japanese troops occupied French Indo-China, on orders from Paris not to resist — orders which only arrived after the II/5^e had attempted to stop Japanese forces advancing towards Lang Son from the Chinese border. From October 1940 to March 1945 the garrisons remained in nominal control of the French colony, under Japanese occupation. There were incidents, particularly when Thai troops attempted, with Japanese encouragement, to violate the border; but there were no major confrontations with the Japanese until March 1945. On the 5th of that month Japanese forces moved into position secretly and, acting to a co-ordinated plan, fell upon all the Legion's main posts and attempted to disarm and intern the garrisons. They resisted stoutly, and were generally captured only after all

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Plate 29: Parade Dress

91. Lieutenant, 2^e CSPL, Laghouat, circa **1957:** *From a photograph, and* Sabretasche. *White officer's tunic with long sleeves, worn over white shirt and green tie: collar patches concealed here by* burnous; *sky blue and red patch of Saharan area on right shoulder; company badge on fob; shoulderboards, concealed here by* burnous. *The black* seroual *trousers with decorative knots were peculiar to the 2^e CSPL. The* burnous *is a double robe, the white one worn inside the midnight blue one, with the corners of the white layer carried outside and hooked together in the middle.* **92. Légionnaire, 3^e CSPL, Ft Leclerc,** circa **1958:** *From photographs in* KB *and* L d'O(3). *Enlisted men's tunics in this company had long sleeves; they were worn next to the skin, with white* serouals, naïls, *and the double* burnous. *Two sashes are worn, one at the waist and the other crossed on the chest under red-brown leather equipment of traditional Saharan pattern. Note medals pinned to* burnous. **93. Capitaine, 1er RE, Aubagne, early 1970s:** *From photographs in* KB. *Officer's 1946 battledress worn as parade dress with* képi, *belt and holster, and black* rangers. *The regimental badge, concealed here, hangs from the right pocket on a green fob, stitched red. The paratroop brevet is almost universal among officers and NCOs of all units of the Legion. This ex-ranker captain is taking command of a company at a ceremony involving handing over the* fanion.

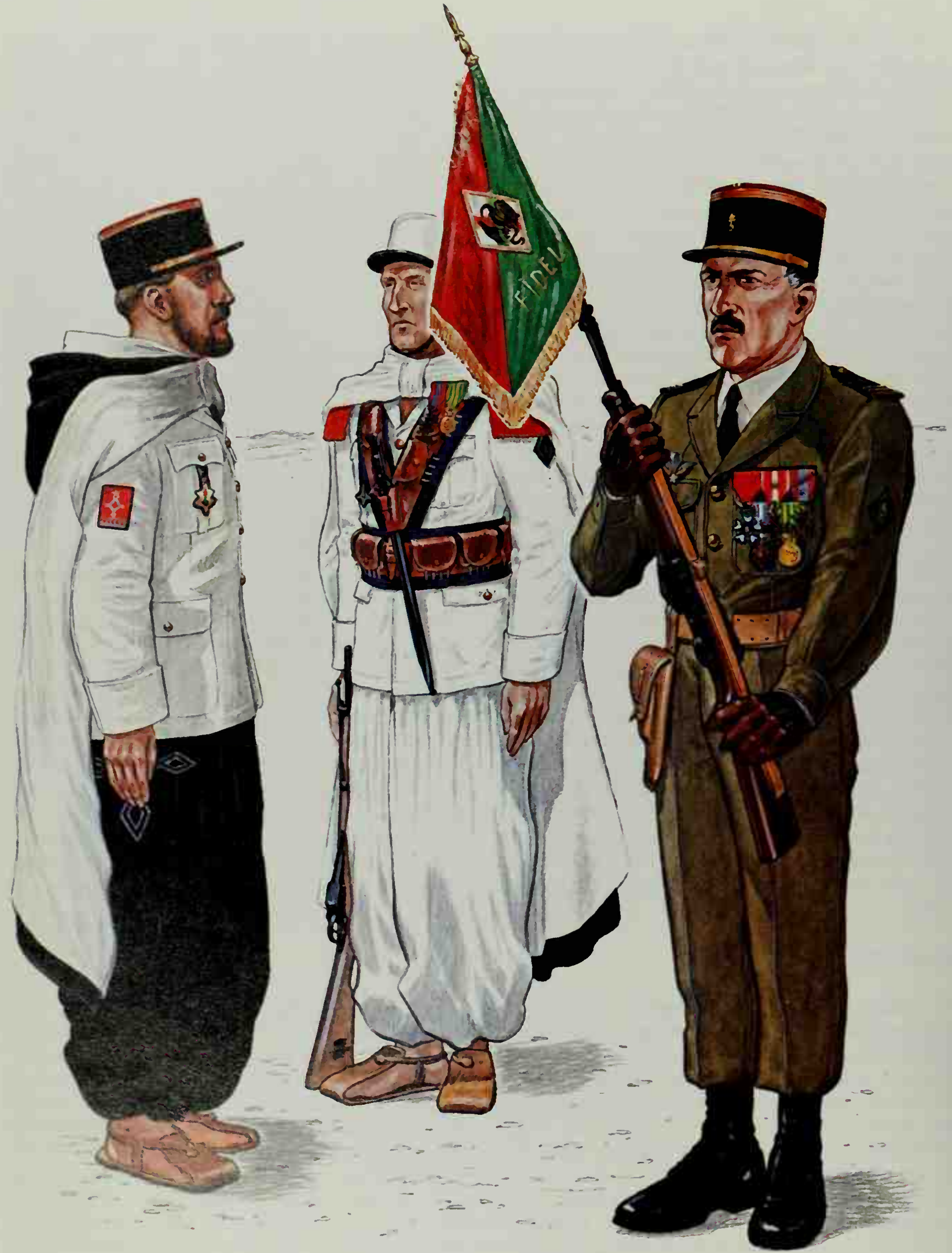

Plate 29: **Parade Dress**

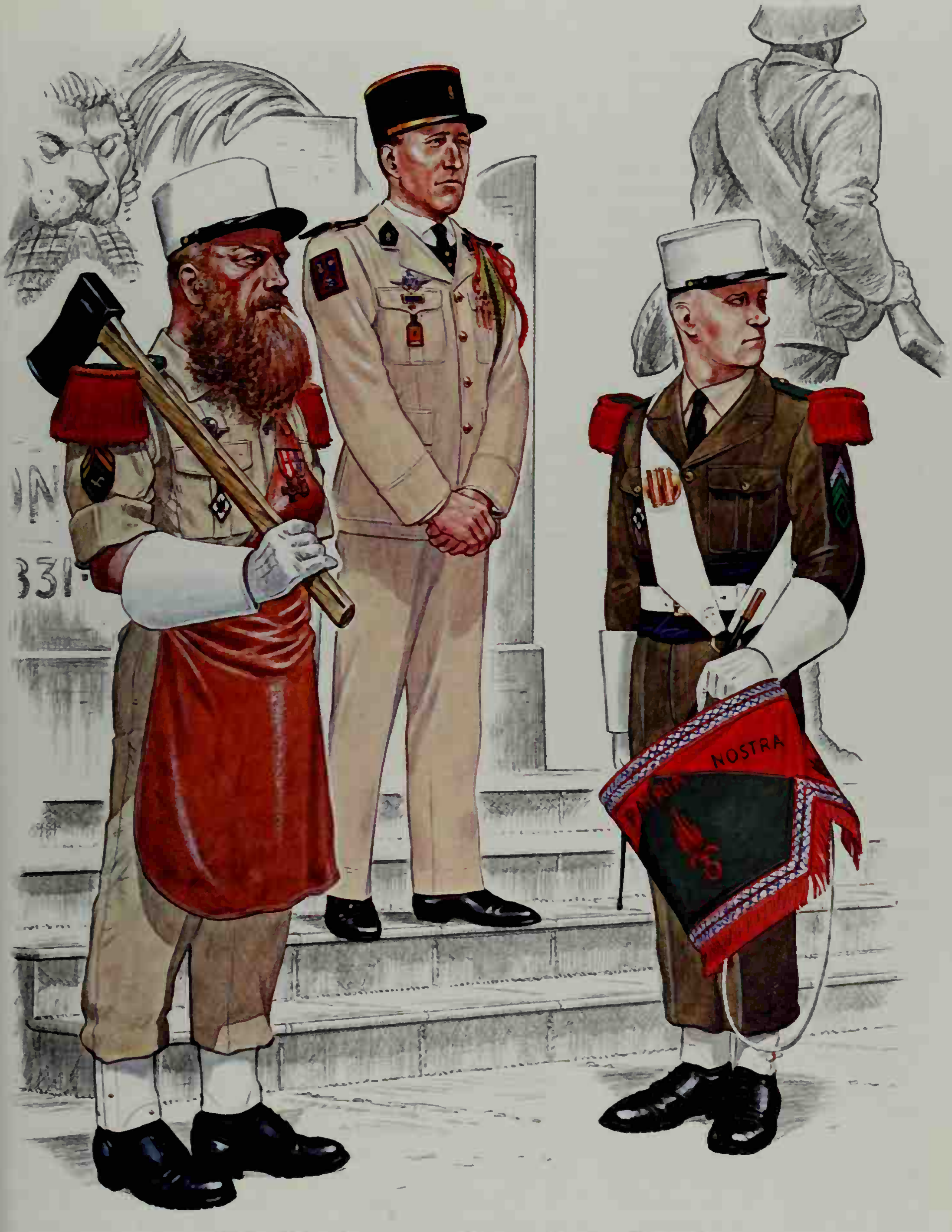

Plate 30: Service and Parade Dress, 1960s-70s

means of resistance had gone. The survivors were treated with characteristic Japanese savagery, and many were murdered out of hand. A large part of the 5^{e} REI were up-country at the time, on column near the Red River. On hearing the news they determined to fight their way to Chinese territory. Their epic fighting retreat lasted 52 days, and covered about 800kms (500 miles) of the most punishing terrain in the Far East; they fought off numerous Japanese attacks before reaching the Chinese frontier in the first days of May 1945. The man with immediate responsibility for their fate in that uneasy refuge was the French ambassador to Chiang Kai Chek's government — who was none other than General Zinovi Pechkoff, the one-armed Legion hero of World War I and the Moroccan campaign.

The wounded and sick were evacuated by air to India; the remainder were formed into an independent *bataillon de marche,* and early in 1946 marched slowly south once again. Their route followed the Tonkin-Laos border, and was almost identical to the later 'Ho Chi Minh Trail'. Restoring order as they went — for local bandits had naturally flourished in remote areas for years past — they eventually reached Saigon. After assisting the 13^{e} DBLE in securing the peace of the city, they were disbanded on 14 November 1945, and were shipped back to Sidi-bel-Abbès. World War II had rather disrupted their normal discharge rights: it is recorded that the average age in this battalion was 42, with 21 years' service!

Corporal bugler of the I/6^{e} REI, Syria, May 1940. He wears the uniform of the 1920 regulations, in winter-weight mustard-khaki cloth, apparently with the collar open over a shirt-collar and tie. Parade epaulettes and the *fourragère* of the *Croix de Guerre TOE* are worn; and just visible on his left forearm are the two short green diagonal ranking stripes of wartime pattern above a similar diagonal of tricolour musician's lace (ECPA)

Plate 30: Service and Parade Dress, 1960s–70s

94. Sergent pionier, 1er RE, summer parade dress, 1970s: *From photographs in* KB. *The* tête de colonne *of the Legion depot and headquarters regiment still provides a sapper platoon for public ceremonial. Summer shirtsleeve uniform, with* epaulettes de tradition, *apron, felling axe, and white gauntlets and anklets. The sleeve diamond on the left arm is balanced in this platoon by one bearing crossed axes on the right; this NCO has the motif in gold. For parades with troops, NCOs wear white-covered* képis. **95. Sous-lieutenant, 3^{e} REI, summer service dress, 1978:** *From a photograph in* KB. *The officer's stone-coloured summer uniform does not have the trouser stripe, but is still worn over the green waistcoat.* Képi, *collar* écussons *and shoulderboards are conventional. Regimental distinctions of this unit are as follows: The US Presidential unit Citation ribbon is worn on the right pocket, inherited from the World War II RMLE. From the RMLEs of both World Wars is inherited the triple* fourragère: *crimson* Légion d'honneur, *yellow and green* Médaille Militaire, *green and red* Croix de Guerre. *Further citations are marked by 'olives' on these cords, above the ferrules. The crimson cord bears one striped vertically, red and pale blue; and a second of red, over white, over vertical green and red stripes. The* Médaille *cord has another pale blue and red* TOE *'olive'. The shoulder patch is that of the Forces Armées du Groupe Antilles-Guyane.* **96. Caporal-tambour, Musique Centrale, 1er RE, winter parade dress, 1967:** *From a photograph. The Legion's famous central band is administered by the 1er RE and wears that regiment's pocket badge. The 1946 battledress is embellished with epaulettes, sash and white leather and webbing equipment. The tricolour musician's lace is worn as a chevron, above the two green rank chevrons on both sleeves. The drum hangings in red and green bear the seven-flame grenade and the Legion motto* 'Legio Patria Nostra' — *'The Legion is Our Homeland'.*

Uniforms 1939–45

The dispersal of Legion units during World War II, their isolation from normal channels of supply, their forced improvisations, and their adoption of foreign clothing all combine to frustrate the uniform historian. Rigid assertions are always suspect when applied to such an unorthodox and self-sufficient corps as the Legion; in the context of 1939–45 they are blatantly ridiculous. The following notes are based on photographs and the memories of veterans; they are not claimed to be comprehensive, and should be taken as subject to a general qualification — 'but this was not invariably the case, and exceptions are known.'

Those Legion units raised in France in 1939–40 were uniformed in most respects like their comrades of the Metropolitan infantry. The *pantalon-culotte* was now replaced by the new *pantalon-golf*, of a fuller 'plus fours' cut, falling loose to the top of the calf and worn with a shorter puttee than previously. The headgear was the dark khaki Adrian helmet and the khaki *bonnet de police*; the *képi* was not worn below the rank of *adjudant*. Collar insignia were of pre-war pattern, e.g. a green cypher '11' within double green pipings, but small square khaki tabs were sometimes fixed to the outer edges of the fall collars and folded upwards and inwards to cover the *écussons*, buttoning in place.

Insignia of enlisted ranks reverted to World War I style, small diagonal bars of green and gold being worn on the forearms. They were sometimes repeated *en chevron* on the front of the bonnet. All uniform buttons were supposed to be painted khaki. There was apparently some issue of the new 1935 leather equipment, but to what degree is uncertain. Officers' uniforms were unchanged.

The vehicle crews of GERD 97 received an issue of the leather three-quarter length coats, proofed over-trousers (*pantalon cachou*) and special steel helmets of all French motorised troops. Metal insignia are known for the 11e and 12e REI, 21e and 22e RMVE, and GERD 97, some of which are illustrated on page 56.

The 13e DBLE received, at Camp de Larzac, the same uniform. A veteran of the 13e recalls that the tunic was the 1936 model, with a loose fall collar exposing a khaki shirt and tie, and six front buttons. (Whether this was also issued to the 11e and 12e REI is unclear.) The cloth headgear for this regiment was a khaki beret. It was supposedly embellished with a grenade badge, green for enlisted ranks and gold-embroidered for NCOs and officers, but badges do not seem to have been worn widely in fact. Short white socks were worn over the bottom of the puttees, turned down over the boot-tops. There was some issue of mountain

Plate 31: Service and Parade Dress, 1970s

97. Brigadier, 1er REC, summer walking-out dress, mid–1970s: *From items in the author's collection, and from the photographs, notes and reminiscences of former* Brigadier *Tony Jackson of the 1er Escadron. Standard pale stone summer shirtsleeve uniform, lavishly creased, worn with hooked-on insignia, and a light web belt; all metal and lace are cavalry silver. Conventional sleeve-diamond, shoulderboards, chevrons of rank, and regimental fob badge; regimental double* fourragère *in colours of* Croix de Guerre *and* Croix de Guerre TOE, *with silver ferrules. Only three badges are supposed to be worn on the right: here there are four — the regimental insignia on the fob, the silver squadron badge on the flap, the paratroop brevet, and the red, blue and silver Alpiniste Militaire brevet.* **98. Légionnaire, 2e REP, winter service dress, mid-1970s:** *From photographs, and items in the author's collection. The* képi *is the one-piece, all-white type; the upward-curled peak is an 'old soldier' affectation. 'Tergal' tunic and trousers, light khaki shirt, green tie, black shoes; conventional sleeve-diamond on obscured left arm, and shoulderboards. Paratroop brevet and regimental fob badge on right; crimson* fourragère *on left; right shoulder patch of 11th Parachute Division.* **99. Brigadier-chef, 4e Escadron, 1er REC, winter parade dress, 1979:** *From photographs. This grizzled veteran wears the four-pocket 'Tergal' tunic and trousers with parade embellishments; with the running-down of battledress stocks this practice has now begun, although it is not yet universal. Parade features are the sash and epaulettes; the blousing of the trousers into* rangers; *and the carrying of the regimental* fourragères *across to the tunic button. Silver cavalry insignia and metal throughout; note impressive array of more than regulation number of re-enlistment chevrons, an almost unique sight nowadays. As the 'mounted infantry' squadron, the 4e wear web belts. Obscured on the right shoulder would be the patch of the 4th Division.*

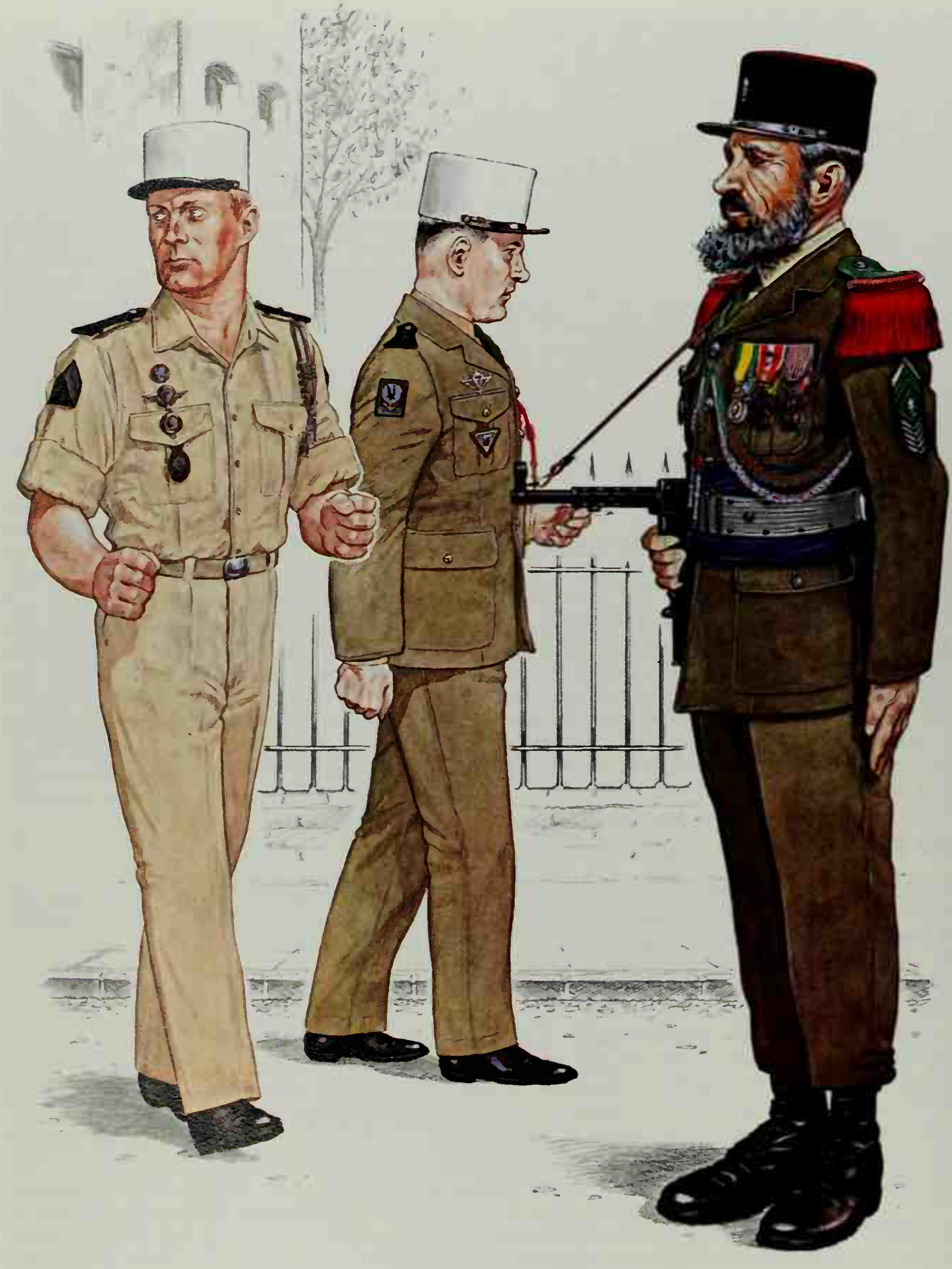

Plate 31: **Service and Parade Dress, 1970s**

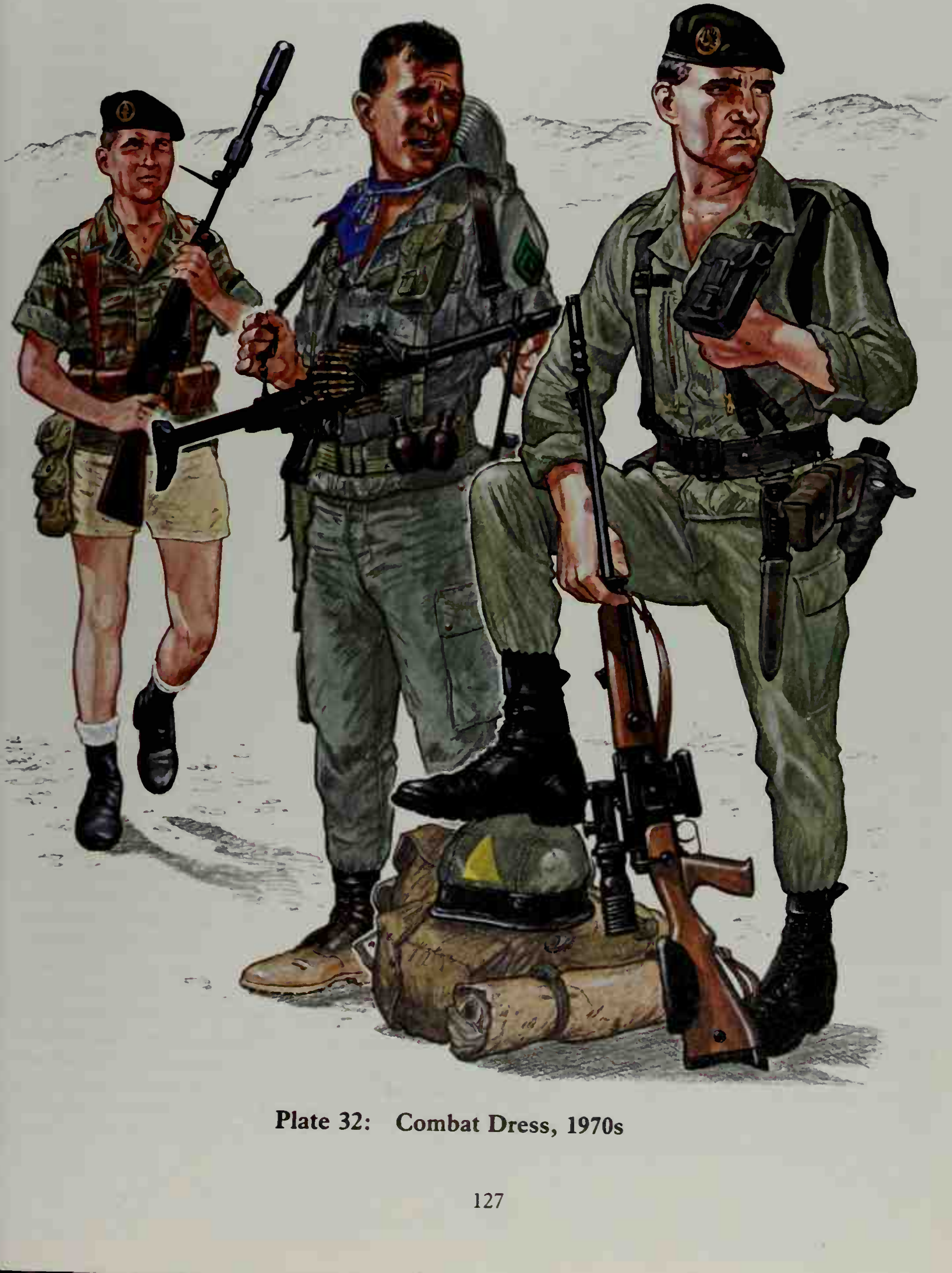

Plate 32: Combat Dress, 1970s

A sergent of the 13^{e} DBLE at Bir Hakeim displays unusual beret insignia, and shoulderstrap ranking in gold on dark blue. (See Colour Plate 24, fig. 74) (IWM)

boots, and of khaki cloth 'spatterdash' gaiters. These latter rather resembled US Army webbing gaiters of the day: a little over 300mm high, they laced up the outside through metal hooks, had a horizontal ankle strap and another under the boot, and covered the lacing of the boots at the front, being cutaway at the heel. How widely these were worn is not clear.

The combat dress of the regiment was completed by a khaki fabric over-jacket known as the *veste d'automitrailleuse*. The two sections of ski-scouts received instead a sheepskin jacket or '*canadienne*'. The *cheich* was generally worn. There was reportedly an issue of the new 1935 leather equipment, but again, how generally it was worn is not confirmed — significant quantities of the old three-pouch equipment were certainly used. The MAS. 36 rifle and the old 1916 carbine were both carried. Two different types of rucksack were issued to skiers and riflemen, and snowshoes were issued to riflemen. Most of these items are illustrated on Plate 23.

At some point after the return from Norway a regimental insignia was adopted. This was a white heater shield divided below the centre by horizontal green-over-red stripes. In the top half was a red grenade and '13' flanked by gold vertical lettering, '*More*' and '*Majorum*'; below, a Viking ship on a blue sea, the white sail with a blue cross. (The motto translates roughly as 'Following the ways of our forefathers'.)

In the United Kingdom in 1940 the 13^{e} were issued with British battledress, and it seems that in the interim they had managed to retrieve their *képis*, which continued to be worn alongside dwindling numbers of khaki berets for the next five years. (The *képis* were cherished, but there were few opportunities to replace them, although the Syrian stores of the 6^{e} REI were doubtless rifled; photographs show that they were often in a sad condition by the end of the war!) British khaki drill tropical uniforms and tropical helmets were issued for the Eritrean campaign, and some British webbing seems to have been used to replace leather

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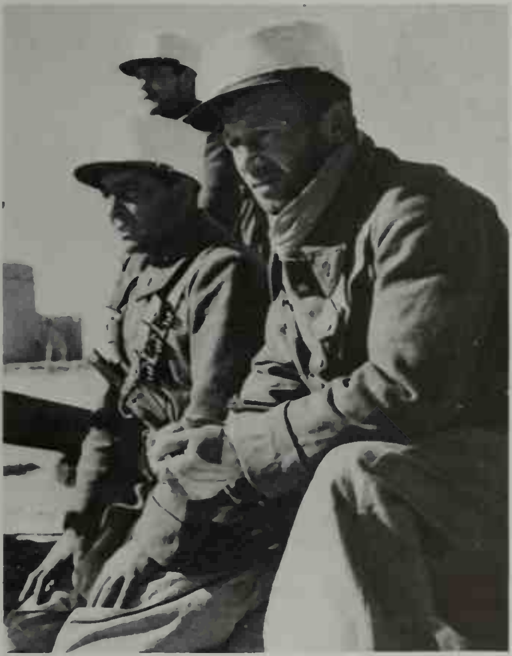
Plate 32: Combat Dress, 1970s

100. Légionnaire, 13^{e} DBLE, Djibouti, mid-1970s: *From photographs. The green beret alternates with the bush hat as field headgear. Light camouflage shirt, khaki drill or olive green shorts, and boots with turned-down socks complete the uniform. Both leather and webbing equipment is used. Photographs show the three-pocket webbing grenade pouch, but it is unclear if this is World War II US issue or a French copy. The rifle is the FSA.49/56, with the 40mm anti-tank grenade fitted to the integral launcher.* **101. Soldat de 1^{ere} classe, 2^{e} REP, Tchad, 1970:** *From photographs. The bush hat is worn slung; we take the fancy civilian scarf from photographs, but the old-style* cheich *was also seen. Transitional M. 1960 airborne fatigues in green drab, but with snapped pockets of old camouflage design. The use of sleeve* écussons *and chevrons on combat dress was unusual, but is confirmed by photographs. French webbing, 1950 'TAP', including first aid packet on left brace. The gunner of the AA.52 team carries an automatic pistol in a web holster on the right of the belt.* **102. Légionnaire, 2^{e} REP, Kolwezi, Zaire, May 1978:** *From photographs. Green beret, M.1964 'Satin 300' combat fatigues, shortened and tightly tailored in the Legion, with vertical breast pocket zips; a black-on-white name tab is fixed to the green 'velcro' strip above the right pocket when not 'tactical'. French webbing, with 1950/53 pouches; green cloth helmet cover. The weapon is the F.1 sniper's rifle, with 3.8 power scope and folding bipod. (Errata: the triangle marked on the rear of the helmet should be in the company colour, like the left shoulder scarf — 1st, green; 2nd, red; 3rd, black; 4th, grey; HQ, yellow; and Recce and Support, blue — with white platoon number.)*

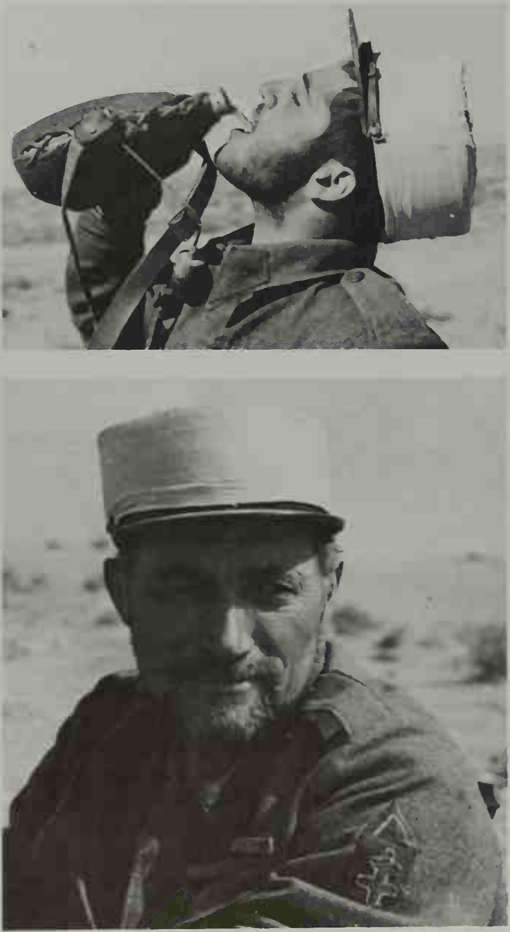
at this period. At first rank insignia were unchanged, being worn on the forearms of the battledress. In 1941 they generally moved to the shoulderstraps of blouses and shirts, in the form of small green and gold chevrons on dark blue or khaki slip-over loops. However, photographs of a parade in Syria in July 1941 show some examples of small chevrons being worn on the left upper shirtsleeves; and photographs taken early in 1942 show chevrons being worn in both positions by men of the same unit. In 1941 officers' ranking also moved from forearm to shoulderstrap, in the form of gold stripes across dark blue or black slip-over loops.



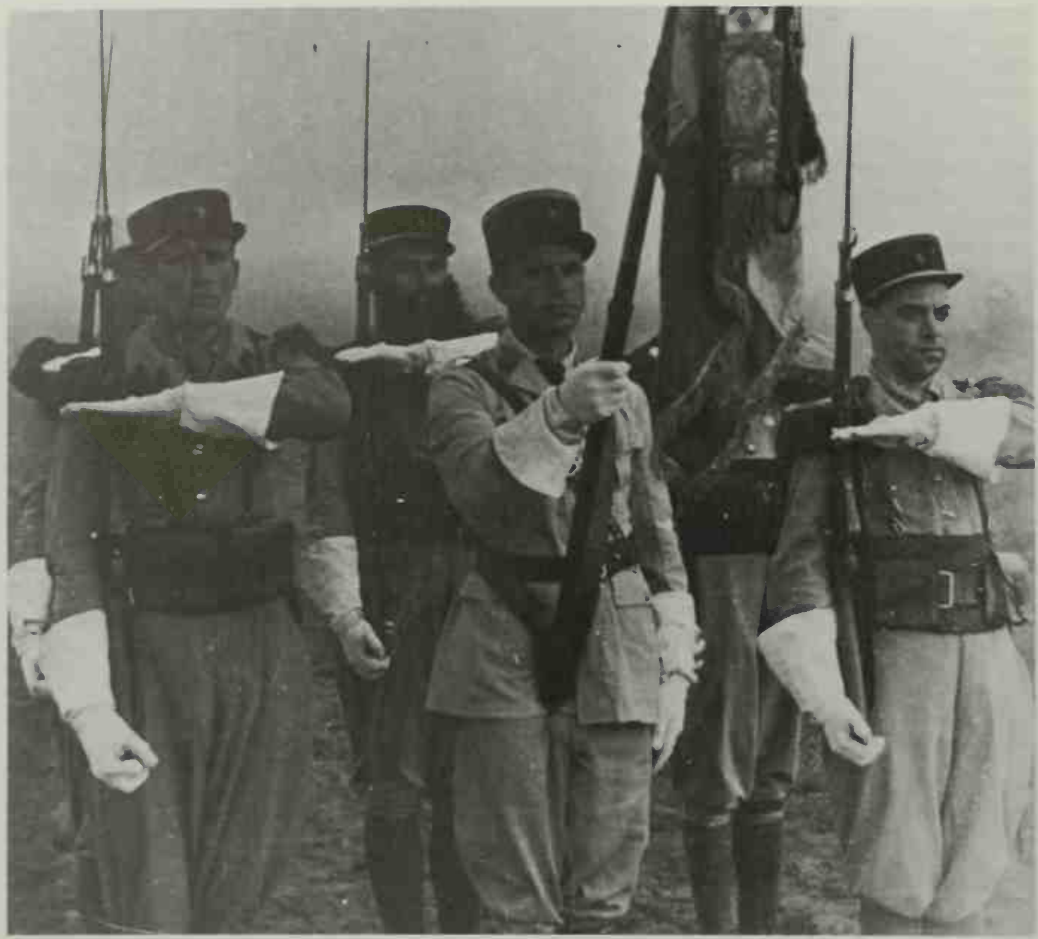
A 75mm gun crew of the Legion's *Batterie Saharienne,* photographed in the early 1940s. They wear conventional *képis* and greatcoats with 1er REI collar patches, with loose-cut *seroual* desert trousers of sand-khaki drill cloth and red-brown leather crossed bandoliers of the type traditional to France's Saharan troops

At some time in 1941 enlisted men started wearing collar patches on the battledress blouse, in the form of khaki diamonds with cut-out green cloth grenades. Officers retained their old patches, both diamond-shaped and pentagonal. By 1941 a Free French insignia was widely observed on the left upper arm of blouses (and less often on shirts), worn below the ranking where both were present. This was a shield- or diamond-shaped patch of dark blue bearing a red Cross of Lorraine with white outlines. Like all the insignia of the 13e, these were home-made or locally procured, and many variations are known.

In the Western Desert the 13e continued to wear British Army khaki drill and battledress uniform,

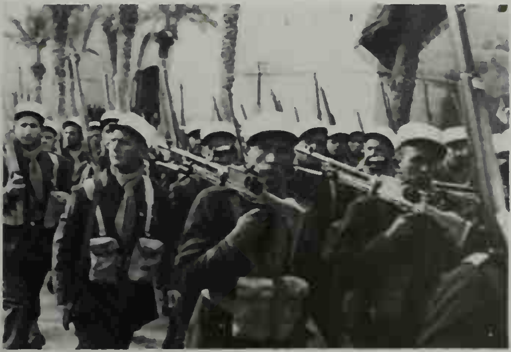


Légionnaires of the 13e DBLE photographed at Bir Hakeim, February 1942. The thirsty private has a typically battered *képi*, and both wear green cut-out grenades on khaki patches on their battledress blouse collars. A veteran of this unit identifies the corporal—note small green sleeve chevrons above white-trimmed red Cross of Lorraine on blue patch—as *Caporal* Ohalka, a Czech veteran who had already served more than fifteen years in the Legion by 1942 (IWM)



The reorganisation of 1942–43, following the German retreat and eventual defeat in French North Africa, found the Legion in a motley array of uniforms from several sources. The colour party of the 3^{e} REI, photographed in Morocco in 1943, wear pre-war summer uniforms, including the four-button 1936 tunic worn over a khaki shirt and tie. The sergeant, left foreground, has gold grenades on his green-piped collar *écussons* (ECPA)

with shoulderstrap ranking. For headgear the *képi*, covered white up to and including *sergents-chef* and without a cover (normally) for officers and *adjudants*, alternated with the now less frequently seen khaki beret. The helmets were British, painted sand-colour, often with a tricolour flash. The personal leather equipment was of pre-war design, from Syrian stocks; the personal weapons were the MAS. 36, the 1916 Lebel carbine, and the FM.24/29; and the old two-litre *bidon* was carried. This seems to have remained the general appearance of the regiment until 1944, when it moved to France from Italy. Coming under 1st French Army, it was later re-uniformed and re-equipped with American Army stocks to bring it into line with its sister units. One insignia worn 'semi-officially' in the interim, between 1943 and 1944, was a green grenade badge on a khaki *écusson* on the upper left arm of the BD blouse — this replaced the collar grenades described above. It was worn above the Free French national patch; and ranking on shoulderstrap loops was retained. On the continent of Europe the headgear was normally the khaki beret, although the *képi* was probably laid by



Légionnaires of an unidentified unit march past in Tunis, 1943. They wear American olive drab four-pocket tunics, matching trousers, and long US Army web gaiters; British web belts and pouches; and carry British Brens and Lee-Enfields. The traditional *cheich* and *képi* are retained; and note (right foreground) shoulderstrap ranking of a *sergent-chef* (ECPA)

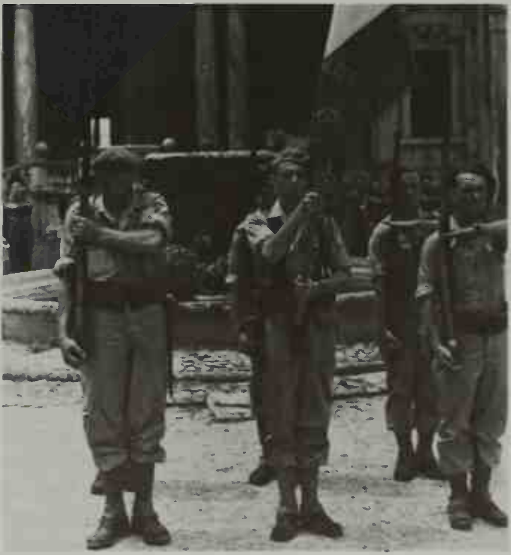
for parades where possible. In Italy the beret bore a pentagonal brass badge, point at the bottom, with a grenade device. In Germany in 1945 it bore a brass cut-out grenade with '13' on the 'bomb'.

Uniforms retained their pre-war appearance in those colonies now under Vichy rule. The use of khaki shirts and shorts became common in North Africa and Syria; and there was an issue of Adrian helmets. No new uniforms, weapons or equipment reached most garrisons during this disheartening period. Metal unit insignia, often of local manufacture, were now spreading too fast for us to attempt any individual listing; some are illustrated in the next chapter. One should perhaps mention a coloured enamel shield worn on the new colonial helmet by the 4^e DBLE in Senegal. The integral Artillery Group of the 6^e REI in Syria were distinguished by red collar *écussons,* instead of khaki, on the '1920' tunic; cypher and pipings were green. The Batterie Saharienne Portée de la Légion wore the same native-inspired field dress as the old mounted companies, including *naïls* and light khaki *serouals,* the crossed red-brown leather bandoliers of Saharan troops, and the *cheich.*

In the summer of 1943, when the RMLE and armoured REC were being formed in Morocco, it was decided that the US Army would take over the equipping of Free French troops, and the British would supply the Dutch, Belgians, and other smaller contingents. Consequently the légionnaire of the liberation of Europe was almost indistinguishable from the 'GI'. They received olive drab wool shirts, ties and trousers; for the rare formal parades there was some issue of 'Class A' four-pocket tunics, dressed up for the occasion with the double *fourragères;* and in the field they wore the light 'olive' 1941 US Army field jacket, steel helmets and full webbing including the long web gaiters. Small arms and support weapons were of standard US Army types: Springfield and Garand rifles, Thompson sub-machine guns, Browning air-cooled .30 and .50 calibre machine guns, etc.

The tank and armoured car crews wore the standard US one-piece herringbone twill overalls in a greyish-green shade; the coveted windcheater 'tanker's jacket' was not issued. The headgear was the *képi,* the steel helmet, or the pierced-leather US tanker's crash-helmet.

The *képis,* though proudly preserved and worn as a mark of unit identity, were in short supply still; and the pack of an armoured infantryman fighting his way across a winter Europe is not the best place for one. From summer 1943 officers, soon followed by NCOs down to sergeant, adopted an alternative. It was common among Free French forces for all ranks to wear as out-of-the-line headgear a sidecap in regimental colours, often unauthorised but usually recalling the traditional uniform colours of the branch. The order allowing



Colour party of the 13^e DBLE, Rome, June 1944. The khaki berets of two of these soldiers seem to bear ranking. American web equipment is worn over khaki drill shirtsleeve uniform. The NCO on the left appears to wear a gold cut-out grenade badge on his left upper sleeve (ECPA)

Légionnaires of the 1^{er} REC crew an M8 75mm Howitzer Motor Carriage and M8 Greyhound armoured cars as the reconnaissance regiment of the 5th Armoured Division, 1944 (ECPA)

Legion junior leaders a dark green sidecap with a red top fold reached the RMLE in their camps in French North Africa. No material to make the caps was readily available. The then-*Sergent-Chef* Milassin recalls that those worn by himself and three other young NCOs, within forty-eight hours, owed their birth to the skill of a local tailor; the green baize cloth from the billiard table of a local café, sadly wrecked that Saturday in a brawl; and the red chorister's cassocks of a chaplain who was unworldly enough to leave them unattended the next morning! (Let this be a warning to those who are tempted to interpret the evidence of military dress regulations too rigidly.)

The officers and *adjudants* wore their ranking in chevrons on the front of the crown; *sergents* wore one, two and three gold diagonal bars well forward on the left side of the turn-up. It was not unknown for young veterans to add non-regulation embellishments, e.g. two small gold buttons on the front of the turn-up, in the British manner, and/or a gold embroidered grenade, cut from an NCO's collar *écusson*, sewn at a backwards slant to the left side of the turn-up, above any ranking. The REC wore all-green sidecaps, or green caps with dark blue top folds, and silver insignia.

In the RMLE and REC ranking was normally worn in the form of short diagonal bars, high at the rear, worn on the upper left sleeve of combat clothing in green, gold and silver. Officers continued to wear shoulderstrap ranking, although there were many examples of rank being displayed on chest-tabs of similar design.

At the end of the war one occasionally sees in photographs French soldiers wearing arc-shaped shoulder titles on the left upper sleeve, similar to British regimental titles of the period, but bearing campaign names: *Bir Hakeim*, *Tunisie*, *Rhin et Danube*, etc. These seem to have been non-regulation, or at most, authorised at unit level, and marked participation in the named campaigns.

9

The Legion since 1945

In 1945 the Legion faced the task of taking possession once again of French colonies and protectorates which had been plunged into turmoil by World War II. The tragedy of world war at least provided the Legion, predictably, with a massive influx of recruits, and within a short period a huge expansion was taking shape. During the Indo-China war, strength would reach 30,000 men.

The 1er REI was re-organised at Sidi-bel-Abbès as the Legion's main training and administrative unit. In May 1945 it put in hand the formation of a *régiment de marche* to be sent to re-occupy French Indo-China, the RMLE-EO ('Extrême-Orient' — Far East). This was renamed the 2e REI in January 1946 while *en route*. In July 1945 the RMLE, returned from Europe, became the 3e REI. In April/May 1946 the 4e DBLE was re-formed in Morocco, reverting to the title 4e REI in October 1947. The 5e REI, disbanded after its ordeal during 1945, was re-formed in November 1949 (from drafts of the 4e and 6e REIs) in Indo-China. The 6e REI was re-formed in Tunisia between 1947 and 1955, but was used purely as a pool of manpower for Indo-China. The 13e DBLE landed in Indo-China in March 1946.

The 1er REC was retained, being shipped to Indo-China in January 1947. The 2e REC was re-formed in Morocco in 1946. The Compagnie Saharienne Portée de la Légion remained in southern Algeria, being retitled 1er CSPL in April 1946 when the cadre of the new 2e CSPL was drawn from its ranks. The 3e CSPL was formed in February 1949, and the 4e CSPL in January 1956.

Two new units, which quickly established an astonishing reputation for themselves in combat, were formed as a result of conditions in Indo-China, where airborne units were proving an important part of the mobile reserve. Following the establishment of a parachute instruction centre at Khamisis, near Sidi-bel-Abbès, in May 1948, and the success of an integral para-company formed within the 3e REI in April 1948, the Legion's first full paratroop unit was formed in July 1948: the 1er Bataillon Etranger de Parachutists. Arriving in the Far East in November, it absorbed the 3e REI's para-company in June 1949. The 2e BEP soon joined it. (A 3e BEP was formed in Algeria, but remained there, acting as a pool for the other battalions. It was shipped out in the last months of the war, but was immediately used to fill out decimated units.)

Indo-China

The pattern of this war, which broke out in earnest in December 1946 and lasted until July 1954, does not allow a succinct narrative account. For the whole period the greatest part of the effort on both sides was devoted to the classic see-saw of guerilla/anti-guerilla operations, involving hundreds of thousands of men spread from the huge swamps of the Mekong Delta and the Plain of Junks in Cochin-China, up the narrow, hilly 'waist' of Annam, to the misty limestone mountains of north Tonkin. Most of the Legion contingent — which had a steady strength of some 20,000 men, out of a total Expeditionary Force of some 150,000 — were concentrated in Tonkin in the second half of the war; this was the cockpit in which successive French commanders struggled with the newly emergent regular army of the brilliant Viet Minh general, Giap.

Certain constant factors are worth mentioning, and a few identifiably important operations. The French, who returned in 1946 to find Ho Chi Minh already installed at the head of a kind of Communist administration, never really took possession of the country. They were limited to the main towns, their forts, and the roads — and by night the Viet Minh had the country largely to themselves. Even in the French heartland, the Red River Delta around Hanoi and Haiphong, guerilla activity was constant — and Ho's intelligence penetration of French military affairs was considerable. The French did not display, at least before 1950, any great urgency; they regarded this as another colonial pacification campaign, and had no apparent idea that it was the first of a new kind of wars. They employed millions of local natives inside their establishments, and then wondered why their convoys got ambushed.

France gradually became disenchanted with the war, and French C-in-Cs lacked full support from home. By law no French conscripts could serve there, so the Expeditionary Force was made up of French regulars in such units as paratroop and tank battalions, artillery, and Air Force and Navy detachments, totalling at any one time about 50,000 men; around 20,000 légionnaires; some 25,000 African Tirailleurs; and between 50,000 and 90,000 local personnel, of varying reliability. The Communists started off with some 30,000 'regulars', and by the great campaigns of the early 1950s had more than 100,000 in six first-rate divisions, with important artillery support, backed up by 200,000 regional and village militiamen. The size, sophistication and competence of the Viet regular army was consistently underestimated by the French.

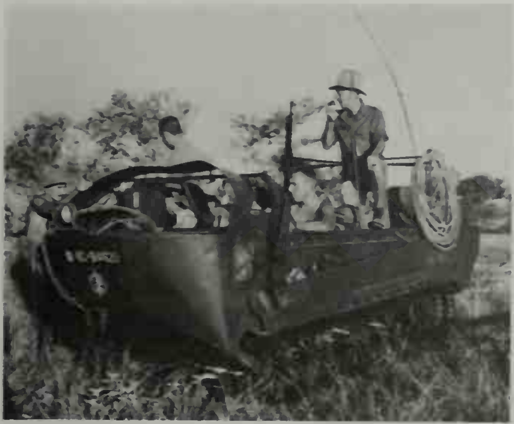
The war developed into a contest between the Viets, who were trying to build up their regular force to a point where it could beat the French head-on in a decisive battle, and the French, who were trying to build up the local Vietnamese forces to a point where they could take over the static defences which so hampered French commanders, thus freeing an expanded mobile reserve for decisive operations of manoeuvre aimed at trapping and crushing the Viet Minh regulars.

Cheerful group of légionnaires and locals clowning for the camera: 2^e REI, Annam, 1946. Note the motley uniforms, the British weapons, and the mixture of *képis* and red/green sidecaps (Milassin)

Field command post of a French airborne unit in Indo-China, tentatively identified as the para-company of the 3^e REI, which operated with the Metropolitan III/1er RCP in 1948–49. This camouflage clothing is made from British 1942 windproof camouflage material, called by the French 'sausage skin'.

The Viets won this contest in 1954. The French never had enough Mobile Groups or parachute battalions; they never had the necessary transport aircraft fleet; they very rarely managed to keep the element of surprise long enough to catch Giap off balance, and when they did, they lacked the means to exploit success. What they did have were some remarkable soldiers: the Colonial paratroopers, the Legion, and some of the best of the North Africans all behaved extremely well under miserable conditions, and showed great courage and determination.

The chronology of the war, in its simplest terms, was as follows. In 1946 at a low level, and in 1947–48 at an increased tempo, the war was one of guerilla pin-pricks. Giap's regulars were kept in their refuges in northern Tonkin; the French convoys were in peril, but their forts were generally left alone — a rare exception being the attack on Phu Tong Hoa on the Cao Bang Ridge in north-east Tonkin, heroically held against great odds by 104 légionnaires of the I/3^e REI, in July 1948. Early in 1949 guerilla warfare became more intense, spreading French resources even more thinly with the need for chains of road-defence blockhouses. In autumn 1949 a milestone was reached; the Communist victory in China gave Ho and Giap a friendly ally and supplier just across the



M29 amphibious cargo carrier—'Crab'—of the 1er REC on operations in the Vietnamese paddy-fields. On the side of the nose is painted the white grenade and cypher on a red, green and blue shield; a similar shield on the bow, beneath the number plate, carries the insignia of the 7e Groupe d'Escadrons Amphibie, 1953–55. This vehicle has an FM.24/29 mounted. Note the bush-hats (ECPA)

border from Tonkin. Weapons and instructors began to flow freely; and Giap acquired his first artillery.

Before the rains of May to October 1950 reduced his mobility, Giap had a couple of trial assaults on French posts, both successful. By the end of the rains his six divisions were ready for a major confrontation. In September the important post of Dong Khe, mid-way along the Cao Bang Ridge close to the Chinese border, was overrun despite an epic defence by men of the II/3e REI. Columns moving in both directions along the important RC.4 road were heavily ambushed, driven into the jungle, and destroyed. Cao Bang, and later Lang Son, were abandoned; the whole ridge fell to Giap, and something like panic gripped the French high command. The Viet Minh inflicted some 6,000 casualties on the French in this phase, and captured enough weapons for a division; they also secured a large slice of difficult country right along their neighbour's border, making Chinese support even easier. The 1er BEP, III/3e and most of the II/3e REI were wiped out in this disaster.

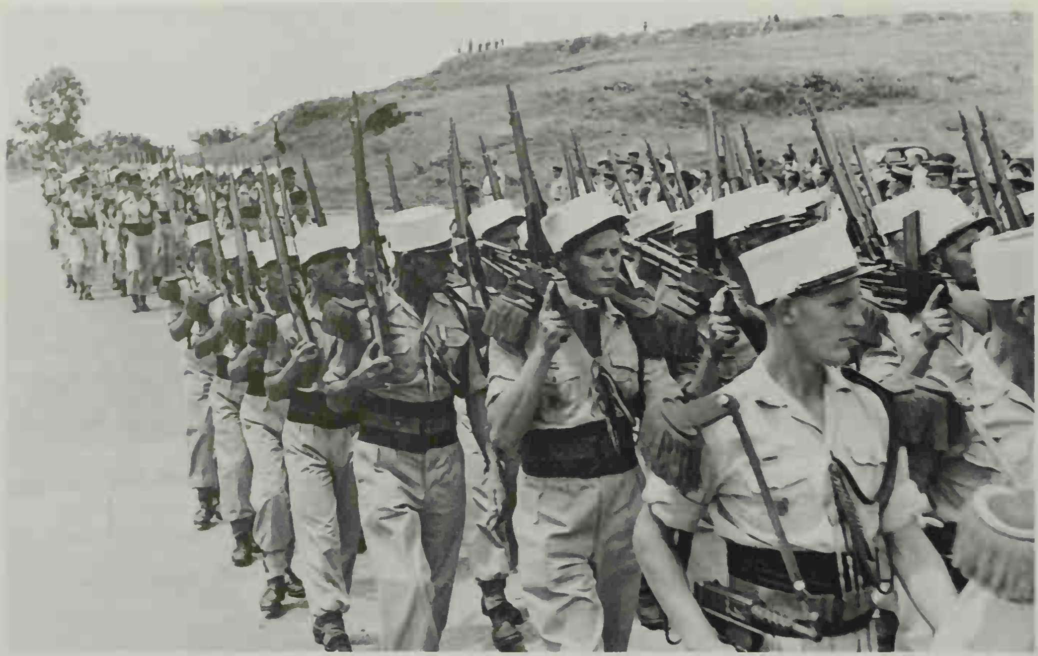
In December 1950 Gen de Lattre arrived to take full military and political command, and stopped the rot to some extent. He ordered the construction of the De Lattre Line of concrete forts all round the Red River Delta, and stopped dead, with expensive losses, no less than three attempts by Giap to move into a new phase of conventional warfare. The battles of Vinh Yen (January 1951), Mao Khe (March), and the Day River (May/June) improved French morale somewhat.

In autumn 1951 de Lattre launched a major attack on Hoa Binh, about 40 kms (25 miles) outside the Delta west of Hanoi; a road, RC.6, and a loop of the Black River both gave access to this important Viet supply staging post, which commanded a large triangle of territory. It was taken, and held for a while, but steady Viet pressure made its reinforcement more and more expensive, and in February 1952 it was abandoned as an encumbrance. The disengagement and retreat cost hard fighting. By this time de Lattre had retired ill, and died. He was replaced by Salan.

In October 1952 there was a slightly less costly repeat of Cao Bang: the Ngia Lo Ridge between the Red and Black Rivers fell to Giap, and again, para battalions from the scanty reserve were sacrificed to cover the retreat of the garrisons. The east-west defensive lines covering the vulnerable Laotian border were now thin, and Giap moved south-west. Thinking to block his route home, and thus draw him into unfavourable battle, Salan launched a major thrust north-westwards across Giap's rear, moving a large force from the Delta up RC.2 and the Clear River. This Operation 'Lorraine', involving 30,000 men and enormous logistic expense, penetrated 160 kms (100 miles) into Viet territory, and destroyed some stores; but Giap refused to be panicked into retreat, knowing that the thin probe could not be maintained long. The French had to fight their way back to the Delta.

Shortly afterwards, in November-December, Giap made another mistake of overconfidence; he spent one of his regular divisions in vain attacks on Na San, an isolated French base in the Black River valley. Heavily reinforced and supplied entirely by air, it held out. This bred a dangerous optimism about the strength of isolated 'air-heads' among French planners.

In April-May 1953 Giap manoeuvred brilliantly in the direction of Laos, avoided major engagements, made the French tie up aircraft reinforcing Luang Prabang and the Plain of Jars, and returned to north-east Tonkin in his own time. In May a new C-in-C, Navarre, was considering his options; with only some 30,000 mobile reserves, he determined to 'sweat out' the 1953–54 campaign season, launching minor thrusts to keep Giap on his toes, while the growth of Vietnamese National Army forces — and US aid — allowed him to build a large reserve for a decisive offensive in 1955.



A parading unit of the 3^{e} REI in Tonkin, *circa* 1952, display the summer ceremonial uniform: khaki drill shirts and slacks with the blue sash; red and green epaulettes; white-covered *kêpi*, unit distinctions such as the triple lanyard and the US Presidential Unit Citation; US Army web belts; and, in this case, British 1937 pattern web anklets. Visible weapons are the MAS.36 rifle, the FM.24/29 light machine gun, and the MAT.49 sub-machine gun. The method of holding the rifle at the 'slope' is strange to Anglo-Saxon eyes (ECPA)

In July 1953 he launched Operation 'Hirondelle', a neat attack by three paratroop battalions on Viet bases round Lang Son; the paras were successfully recovered by sea. At the same time there was a large scale amphibious operation in the waist of Annam. In August the Na San garrison was successfuly evacuated by air, once more causing the wrong conclusions to be drawn; Giap made no attempt to interfere.

Navarre anticipated a serious invasion of Laos when the rains finished; he decided to guard against this, and perhaps to distract Giap from attacks on the Delta, by implanting a major 'air-head' in the border hills. In November 1953 paras dropped in the valley of Dien Bien Phu, and over the winter it was built up into a major fortress. 270 kms (170 miles) from Hanoi, isolated in a bowl of jungled hills, it was reliant on air support for every bullet and sand-bag. By March 1954 some 11,000 men had been installed, including twelve combat battalions: three Algerian, one Moroccan, two local, one of French paras, and from the Legion the I/2^{e} and III/3^{e} REIs, the I and III//13^{e} DBLE, and the 1er BEP.

By mid-March Giap had successfully surrounded this death-trap of thin bunkers and widely-dispersed trenched strong-points with his 50,000 best infantry, supported by more than 200 guns and strong anti-aircraft artillery. On 13 March he closed his fist on Dien Bien Phu . . . It took him two months, and about 22,000 casualties to finish off the garrison, who put up one of the epic defences of military history; but on 8 May the camp fell, and within three months France had concluded a cease-fire and was organising her withdrawal from Asia.

Apart from dramatic losses like the battalions wiped out in the Cao Bang and Dien Bien Phu disasters, the Legion was paying a steady butcher's bill to ambushes, mines, attacks on small posts, and all the other traditional guerilla tactics for nine long years. It is hardly surprising that the casualties were high: the figure of 10,500 dead is a reminder of the major part played by the Legion in

Paratroopers of the 2^e BEP, at least one of them locally recruited, ford a stream in Tonkin, 1952. Note US spotted camouflage uniforms, rucksacks, and CR.39 rifle (ECPA)

Indo-China, 1953; men of the 1^{er} BEP, wearing US camouflage jackets and French olive green or British camouflage trousers, board a Douglas C–47 for a dawn jump (ECPA)

this war. Even low-intensity operations could be alarmingly costly; for instance, even back in 1946, the 2^e REI lost a total of 230 men dead or wounded in only three months of routine security operations against an enemy still weakly armed and organised. In the terrain of Indo-China, ranging from the huge swamps of Cochin-China to the steep, mist-shrouded, jungle hills of northern Tonkin, the guerilla has all the advantages.

The basic details of unit deployments are given in the following summaries. Note that there tended to be much movement of battalions to respond to temporary requirements.

2^e REI: Landed February 1946; pacification of south Annam. I/2^e to Tonkin December 1946; relief of Hai Duong; operated Tonkin until 1954; wiped out at Dien Bien Phu. 1951, II/2^e to Tonkin, and operated in Groupe Mobile in Delta; November 1952, Operation 'Lorraine'; 1953–54, in Laos; Plain of Jars, Luang Prabang. May 1951, III/2^e to Tonkin; in central Annam, July 1952–54. IV/2^e raised in Algeria in late 1949; incorporated Vietnamese troops; in central Annam 1950–54. While in south Annam this regiment operated an armoured train.

3^e REI: Landed April (I/3^e, II/3^e) and June (III/3^e) 1946; pacification of Cochin-China. I/3^e to Tonkin, March 1947; II/3^e and III/3^e follow, October 1947. Operations on RC.4 along border ridges. July 1948, defence Phu Tong Hoa (2nd Coy); March 1949, defence Song Ky Cong (8th Coy); September 1950, fall of Dong Khe (5th, 6th Coys); III/3^e wiped out in retreat from Cao Bang. Re-organised in Hanoi area; new III/3^e formed from Bn de Marche du 1^{er} REI from Algeria. 1951, Vietnamese IV/3^e, V/3^e formed. Operations in Tonkin 1951–54; April 1953, II/3^e to Laos. Groupe Mobile 6, December 1953. III/3^e wiped out again at Dien Bien Phu, as were the 3^e REI personnel of the 1st Mixed Mortar Coy (1^{er} CMMLE).

5^e REI: Re-formed by battalions, Tonkin 1949–50; operated in Delta for most of war. November 1949, I/5^e on RC.6; Son Tay, Hoa Binh. Early 1950, all bns in coastal sector north of Delta. July 1950, II/5^e on RC.4, Lang Son; October 1950, covers retreat from Cao Bang ridge. December 1950, all bns in coastal sector, RC.18, Mong Cay, Binh Lien. 1951, work and operations on De Lattre Line; IV/5^e raised March 1951. February 1952, I/5^e, III/5^e in Hoa Binh sector. November 1952–April 53, III/5^e at Na San. 1953, operations around Delta; July 1953, II/5^e covers return of paras from Lang Son drop; III/5^e in central Annam; October–November 1953, I/5^e in Operation 'Mouette' on south edge of Delta. Early 1954, I/5^e to Laos; II/5^e, III/5^e in heavy fighting in Delta. Left Tonkin for central Annam in November 1954. Volunteers from this regiment and the 3^e parachuted into Dien Bien Phu without training; and the 5^e provided the garrison's 2nd Mixed Mortar Coy (2^e CMMLE).

13^e DBLE: Landed March 1946; pacification of Cochin-China, south Annam; Duc Hoa sector;

Mekong Delta. 1948, II/13ᵉ to Cambodia; central Annam. III/3ᵉ to Hoc Mon sector. 1949, operations in central Annam; IV/13ᵉ raised. 1950, all bns to Hoc Mon sector. 1951, II/13ᵉ, III/13ᵉ to Tonkin; work and operations on De Lattre Line. December 1951 to February 1952, II/13ᵉ, III/13ᵉ in Hoa Binh sector. 1952, III/13ᵉ to central Annam. October 1953, III/13ᵉ in Operation 'Mouette'. 1954, I and III/13ᵉ wiped out at Dien Bien Phu.

1ᵉʳ REC: Landed January 1947, without vehicles; fought on foot, central Annam. By April 1947 two sqns motorised, remainder progressively during 1947; mixture US and British armoured and scout cars, armoured jeeps, Bren carriers, light tanks. 1947, two sqns to Cochin-China, one to south Annam; three on road security duty for 350km (215 miles) north of Tourane. December 1947, 1st and 2nd Sqns, Cochin-China, receive US amphibious M.29 ('Crab'); successful security operations in swamps of Plain of Junks. Early 1950, 6th Sqn joins them. Early 1951, each sqn receives troop of LVT(A).4 amphibious armoured vehicles for supporting infantry ('Alligators'). September 1951, this '1ᵉʳ Groupe d'Escadrons du 1ᵉʳ REC' becomes independent unit, '1ᵉʳ Groupement Autonome'; '2ᵉ Gpmt Auto' formed Haiphong, operates Tonkin; 7th Sqn, same equipment, based Hue under REC command. 1953, re-organisation into '1ᵉʳ and 2ᵉ Gpmt Amphibie' each of three Groupes d'Escadrons, each of one Crab and one Alligator sqn; both operated widely throughout country until 1955. At its peak the 1ᵉʳ REC and its amphibious groups totalled 21 sqns.

1ᵉʳ BEP: Landed November 1948; operations in Tonkin. April 1949, Vietri; May 1949, Tuyen Quang, Song Chay; October 1949, Loung Phai; December 1949, Hoa Binh. February 1950, Thai Binh; September–October 1950, bn wiped out around RC.4 supporting retreat of Cao Bang ridge garrisons. 1st March 1951, bn re-formed with three European, one Vietnamese coys; late March, in action Qui Chau. June 1951, defence Ngoc Lac; July–August 1951, defence Yen Cu Hoa. November 1951–February 1952, Cho Ben, Black River, RC.6 during Hoa Binh battles. February 1952, Phu Ly; autumn 1952–spring 1953, Na San. September 1953, forms 1st Foreign Para Heavy Mortar Coy (1ᵉ CEPML). November 1953, Dien Bien Phu drop. April 1954, remnants amalgamate with remnants 2ᵉ BEP inside Dien Bien Phu. May 1954, wiped out in fall of Dien Bien Phu. November 1954, re-formed and left Indo-China.

2ᵉ BEP: Landed February 1949; operations in south, from Saigon, including seven combat drops in south Annam and Cambodia; distinguished at Ba Cum, April 1950. October 1950 to Tonkin; 1950–51, operations around Delta; Ke Sat. April 1951, Dong Trieu. May 1951, Nam Dinh, Phat Diem. August–September 1951, central Annam; Kontum. October 1951, relief of Ngia Lo. December 1951–February 1952, Hoa Binh battles. 1952, operations in Tonkin. April 1953, Laotian border. July 1953, Operation 'Hirondelle', Loc Binh. April 1954, dropped into Dien Bien Phu; May 1954, wiped out in fall of camp. Re-formed shortly afterwards by re-numbering 3ᵉ BEP, which landed May 1954 at Haiphong.

Apart from these major combat units, there were upwards of 30 detached companies of various kinds formed during the war from légionnaires with useful skills; these were transport, repair, engineering, and logistics units.

Morocco and Madagascar

The French protectorate over Morocco lasted until 1957, and several units were based there during the Indo-China war. In May 1946 the 4ᵉ DBLE was re-formed with one battalion at Fez, another at Meknes, and a 'mounted company' at Ksar-es-Souk. The next year an independent group of motorised companies, based at Agadir since 1944 and attached to the 3ᵉ REI, was re-titled Groupement Porté Légion Etrangère du Maroc (GPLEM). The 4ᵉ rose to four battalions, but was used as a training and manpower pool for other theatres. In June 1947 its IV Bn was sent to Madagascar, where disorder had broken out. In October 1947 each remaining battalion gave up one company for the new 2ᵉ BEP; the same month, the old title '4ᵉ REI' came into use again. In 1949 the III/4ᵉ was sent to Tonkin as part of the re-formed 5ᵉ REI; the drain continued, and by late 1951 only one battalion remained, at Meknes. In December the IV/4ᵉ returned from Madagascar, but remained autonomous, being based at Fez.

In April 1952 came the first signs of the anti-French rioting and pressure for independence which would continue for five years. The Legion was continually involved in police action. In March 1955 the two battalions joined up again, as I and II/4ᵉ REI. In the winter of 1956–57 the regiment, now fused with the GPLEM, took on a new shape. It had an HQ company and two separate Groupes, each of three Compagnies Portées — motorised companies, with patrol trucks and integral light

Photographed at Dien Bien Phu during the battle of March-May 1954, a wounded officer of the Legion, identified by a veteran as *Lt* Boissy of the 2^{e} REI. Note rather unusual use of shoulderboards in the front line. Just visible tucked into the far side of his waistband is the red/green sidecap

armour. In 1957 the regiment left Morocco, after 50 years of Legion involvement. The last company crossed into Algeria on 18 April, the same day that the 4^{e} suffered its first fatality in the Algerian war.

The IV/4^{e} arrived in Madagascar in June 1947. For the next four and a half years it carried out police and construction duty, at first as the 'Bataillon de Marche 4^{e} DBLE' and, after May 1949, as part of the Groupe des Unités de Légion Etrangère à Madagascar, the other units of the group being an engineer company and the armoured jeeps of the 4th Sqn, 2^{e} REC. In December 1951 the group was dispersed.

The 2^{e} REC was based in Morocco, acting as a pool and reception unit for the 1er REC in the Far East; its 4th Sqn stayed in Madagascar until February 1952. The 2^{e} REC saw active service against dissidents in the early 1950s, including, nostalgically enough, the Beni Snassen. In October 1955, down to three squadrons, it absorbed the 2nd Amphibious Group of the 1er REC, back from Indo-China, which became its 4th Sqn in May 1956. The 1st and 4th Sqns moved to Algeria in June 1956. In August the 2nd Sqn was attached to the 1er REP for the Suez operation with AMX.13 tanks. In September 1956 the 3rd Sqn moved to Algeria; the 2nd returned to Algeria in December, but the 1er REP hung on to it!

Algeria and Tunisia

The Algerian war followed a course even less amenable to a narrative précis than that in Indo-China. It broke out in 1954, with low-intensity guerilla operations. It grew in scope and savagery until 1959, and by the end of 1960 the military threat had generally been defeated. It must never be forgotten that the French Army had won the military war by the time the politicians decided upon withdrawal. The methods they were forced to use, and the tensions created within their own Army, proved to be corrosive of morale and national cohesion — but militarily, they won.

The ALN 'regulars', whose camps in Morocco and Tunisia paralleled Giap's refuge in the 'Viet Bac', never confronted the French in conventional warfare. Their series of attempts to cross the frontier defences in battalion-sized groups, and to reinforce the hard-pressed *wilayas* inside Algeria, ended in disaster. Intelligent use of wire fences, minefields, electric sensors, and patrolling units deployed in depth proved too much for them. They remained aloof from then on, awaiting the coming power struggle among their own leaders.

The ALN organisation in the large towns, solidly entrenched in the casbahs, received a rude shock late in 1957. Cutting cleanly through the morass of local politics and corruption, the authorities sent Gen Massu's 10th Para Division into Algiers. Within weeks the terrorist outrages almost died away. The ALN organisation was shattered, its leaders dead or in jail.

The ALN active service units in the wilderness of the Algerian interior proved vulnerable to the 'Challe Plan'. In simple terms this involved holding back élite units such as the paras and the Foreign Legion motorised regiments for a general reserve. The sector defences were manned by low-quality national service units. Once ALN units had been roughly located, the 'intervention regiments' would be moved in at short notice and in great strength. Systematic sweeps, with tight radio communications and plentiful air support, would 'flush' the enemy. The paras or légionnaires would then hang on their tail relentlessly, seeking to pin them down or, at least, delay and harass them, while a net of other units was quickly woven by radio and helicopter, and dropped around the enemy. So expert did 'Challe's steamroller' become that by 1960 most ALN units had been forced to revert to an earlier stage of Mao's classic ladder of escalating guerilla operations, breaking down into small fugitive groups in the mountains.

Sadly, the 'para cult' of fitness, dedication, and ruthlessness which achieved these results had its own built-in tensions. The shared ordeal of Indo-China, and the shared distrust of politicians in a period when French public life was not notable for its high level of integrity, tended to alienate the military élite from the country whose dirty work they were doing. When told that it had all been for nothing, they exploded; and France lost the services of some of the most remarkable soldiers the world has seen since 1945.

The basic dates and areas of involvement of the Legion units are listed below; only one or two very major operations are listed by name. Operations fell into several broad phases. In 1954–55 the central training unit, the 1er REI, put into the field a number of *bataillons de marche* to deal with outbreaks, while units returning from Indo-China were fed into action piece-meal, often at the cost of their disembarkation leave. In 1956–57 the REIs were settled as static sector troops with definite areas of responsibility; the RECs and CSPLs patrolled over wide areas, intervening as possible or necessary anywhere on their range; and the REPs were used all over the country as a 'fire brigade'. In 1957 the 2^{e} REI became, like the 4^{e} from Morocco, a motorised regiment, with two autonomous groups of motorised companies with integral light armoured support; these two regiments were thereafter moved around the country at need. Late in 1958 the 3^{e} and 5^{e} REIs and the 13^{e} DBLE became 'intervention regiments' as well, and from then on the whole strength of the Legion — about 20,000, on average — was available to the mobile reserve, with the exception of the central reception, training and services units of the 1er RE. The Legion fought with courage and endurance for its adopted homeland; the war cost it 65 officers and 1,911 enlisted ranks killed in action or died of wounds. It was not an easy war, in any sense.

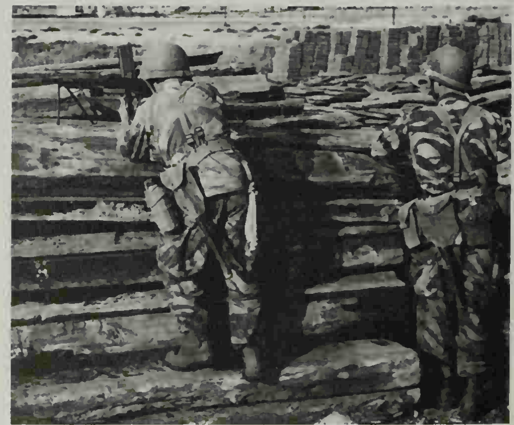
Central Services: The Groupement Autonome de la Légion Etrangère (GALE) was formed in 1950 to provide and co-ordinate central services for the combat units — being popularly known to the latter as the '*embourgeoisement*'!

In July 1955 the 1er REI dropped the 'infantry' suffix to become simply 1er RE, providing under GALE the reception and training facilities for all arms: six battalions and three squadrons, spread all over Oran Province. July 1957: creation of overall command, the Inspection Technique de la Légion Etrangère, ITLE, based in Paris, and headed by a general officer with Legion experience.

1er REI/1er RE: In 1945 a Bn de M was sent to Constantine Province, in a time of disorder. In August 1954 the 1er and 2^{e} Bns de M were sent to Morocco, and in September 1954 the 3^{e} Bn de M was sent to Tunisia. In November 1954 a Demi-Bn de M was sent to Aurès region: it was relieved in January 1955 by full Bn de M which, in July 1955, became the III/3^{e} REI. In November 1954–January 1955 the Groupement Porté de la Légion Etrangère d'Algérie (GPLE d'Algerie) was created at Ain-Sefra from IV/1er REI, comprising 21^{e}, 22^{e}, 23^{e}, 24^{e} Compagnies Portées.

Between 1957 and 1962 various instruction units were committed to local combat operations in Oran Province on many occasions; by the cease-fire of 1962, the regiment had a total of 53 dead and 97 wounded. The main HQ group left Sidi-bel-Abbès for Aubagne, France, late in October 1962.

2^{e} REI: Landing at Bizerta, Tunisia in February 1955, it moved, in June 1955, to south Tunisia; in July 1955, the former I/6^{e} REI became III/2^{e}: operations, south Tunisia and south-east Algeria. September 1955, I/2^{e} sent to Morocco; the remainder followed by January 1956: operations in Rif mountains, from Taza. In June 1956 it moved to eastern Algeria–Bône, Djidjelli. It became motorised regiment, and I/2^{e} and III/2^{e} were disbanded, in late 1956; II/2^{e} formed the basis for a new GCP.1, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd Coys; in action, October 1956. GCPLE d'Algerie was disbanded, and absorbed as GCP.2–4th, 5th and 6th Coys.



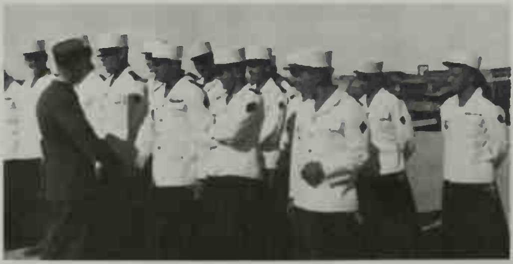
Rear view of the combat uniform and webbing of two paratroopers of the 1er REP photographed at Suez, 1956 (ECPA)

GCP.1 moved to Ain-Sefra and was joined by GCP.2 in March 1957. There followed five years' operations in south-west Algeria and on Algerian/Moroccan 'Barrage' (electrified frontier fence, minefields, etc, to prevent infiltration ALN from Moroccan camps). By the cease-fire the regiment had a total of 266 dead and about 600 wounded.

In October 1962 it was deployed to the Colomb-Béchar region as the main Legion unit remaining in Sahara under cease-fire terms. In April 1963 it absorbed the 1^er^ ESPL and 4^e^ CSPL and, in April 1964, the remnant of 4^e^ REI. Late in 1967 it was moved to the Mers-el-Kébir base enclave. In January 1968 it was disbanded; one *compagnie de marche* remained until August 1968 as the last Legion unit in Algeria.

3^e^ REI: Landing in Algiers in December 1954, with two bns, it was deployed to Aurès region. In July 1955, it absorbed two Bns de M of the 1^er^ REI. In June 1956 it was reduced to three bns. In early 1957 it went to the region Djidjelli-Taher-El Milia. In September 1957, the III/3^e^ was disbanded. In January 1958 it moved to the Tunisian frontier zone between Bône and Soukh-Ahras, involved in operations on the 'Morice Line'. In October 1958 it became an 'intervention regiment' — two HQs controlling two groups of four coys each. In February 1959 it began mobile duties under 'Challe Plan'; various operations followed between 1959–61, including particularly: 'Etincelle' and 'Jumelles' in July-August 1959; 'Pierres Precieuses' in November 1959; in Aurès, autumn 1960; Operation 'Dordogne', April 1961. In July 1961 it moved to the Bizerta base, and was in action against Tunisian blockade, moving in August 1961 to Orleansville. It was in the Ouarsenis at cease-fire; it had a total of 197 dead and 390 wounded. Shortly afterwards it was shipped to Madagascar.

4^e^ REI: The regiment crossed from Morocco in March/April 1957, and was deployed to south-east Algeria. It took part in operations (1957–58) in Tebessa-Biskra regions, Aurès and Nementchas. In June 1959 it transferred to Guelma region, covering Tunisian Barrage, and was engaged in operations in this region until early 1962; at cease-fire it was in Negrine region. In July 1962 it moved to Touggourt, Ouargla to guard oil fields. In April 1963 it absorbed 2^e^ and 3^e^ CSPLs. In mid-1963 it had companies at Reggane, Adrar, In-Salah and Amguid. In April 1964 it was disbanded, and the effectives absorbed by 2^e^ REI.



Men of a *Saharienne* company wearing the white tunic as service dress. The black, embroidered *seroual* trousers of the 2^e^ CSPL are worn here, rather puzzlingly, with long-sleeved tunics: most sources give this company short sleeves (Milassin)

5^e^ REI: Landed Mers-el-Kébir, February-April 1956, three bns; to Orleansville. April 1956, to Tlemcen region; 1956–58, operations in north-west Algeria; August 1957, III/5^e^ disbanded. In October 1958 it became intervention regiment, in two groups each of three coys; in November 1958 it began a period of mobile operations in many areas. July 1959, Operation 'Jumelles', Kabylia; November 1959, Collo Peninsula; October 1960, Aurès; then to Oran Province — Géryville, Chellala. 1961, on Moroccan border. January 1962, Tlemcen area. By cease-fire of March 1962, 146 dead and 353 wounded. July 1962 to Colomb-Béchar region; October 1962, to Ain-Sefra. In October 1963, at Mers-el-Kébir, it became mixed Legion-engineers 5^e^ Régiment Mixte du Pacifique, and was shipped to French Polynesia.

13^e^ DBLE: Landed Bizerta and Algiers, June-July 1955. Tunisian border region; operations around Guelma, Philippeville, the Nementchas. 1956, operations all over Constantine Province; III/13^e^ disbanded. 1957–58, Aurès. In October 1958 it became an intervention regiment — operations all over east, 1958–59, with base at Batna, then Bougie. Operation 'Etincelle' in Hodna massif; 'Jumelles' in Kabylia; 'Pierres Precieuses' around Philippeville; Collo Peninsula. In Algiers, January-March 1960, then to Tunisian Barrage. 1961–62, Tunisian Barrage, Kabylia, Aurès; at cease-fire, opposite 'Duck's Beak' salient of northern Tunisian frontier. In April-October 1962 it was shipped to Djibouti.

1^er^ REC: Landed Mers-el-Kébir November 1955 (1^er^ GA) and February 1956; to Sousse, Tunisia;

re-organised as four sqns, March 1956. Operations south Tunisia, south-east Algeria, 1956; December to Algeria, Bou-Saada area. Operations south and central Algeria, 1957; April, M.8 armoured cars replaced by French EBRs; October, 4th Sqn disbanded. May 1958, to Tebessa; Tunisian Barrage patrols. 1959, Batna, Aurès, the Nementchas; 1960, operations all over south Constantine Province. Parts of regiment fought as infantry, often helicopter-borne. April 1961, suspicion of involvement of some personnel in 'Generals' Putsch'. August 1961, to west Algeria; Marnia, Saïda. At Tlemcen, March 1962; after cease-fire to Méchéria. January 1964 to Mers-el-Kébir enclave. October 1967, to new base at Orange, France.

2ᵉ REC: Crossed from Morocco to southern Algeria, summer 1956; Ouargla, Touggourt, Ghardaisa, Laghouat on fringes of Sahara. 1957, operations south central Algeria. Spring 1958, two sqns to Negrine area. December 1958, regiment to Djelfa region; operations south central zone 1959–60. 1961 to southern bases again. February 1962 to south Aurès, Biskra, Negrine. July 1962 disbanded, effectives absorbed by 1ᵉʳ REC. Throughout the war the regiment included a large 'mounted infantry' element.

The infantry version of the camouflage uniform worn as service dress, complete with *fourragère* and unit insignia, by a soldier of the 3ᵉ REI: Algeria, 1961 (Milassin)

1ᵉʳ BEP/1ᵉʳ REP: Landing at Mers-el-Kébir February–March 1955, the 1ᵉʳ BEP moved to south Constantine Province, and in September became the 1ᵉʳ REP. It took part in operations in all sectors in 1955–56. In November 1956 it landed at Port Fouad as part of the Anglo-French Suez operation. Returning to Algeria in December 1956, it was based at Zeralda. In March 1957 Lt-Col Jeanpierre took command. From this point on, no summary is possible in a book of this kind; the regiment — mustering four rifle companies, motorised recce and heavy-weapons companies, and an integral tank squadron — played a leading part in all major operations for the rest of the war, as an élite mobile reserve — part of 'Challe's steamroller'. Under the inspiring leadership of the greatly admired Lt-Col Jeanpierre it achieved extraordinary results, particularly in 1957–58, both in numerous operations in the wildest parts of the mountainous interior, and, in September-October 1957, in the Algiers casbah. The 'Battle of Algiers' has aroused much controversy; certainly harsh interrogation methods were used, and equally certainly the paras smashed the ALN network, captured or killed its leaders, and stopped terrorist outrages in a matter of weeks. Jeanpierre was killed in action late in May 1958; the regiment he had brought to perfection went on getting remarkable results until 1961. In April 1961, appalled at France's imminent abandonment of Algeria, the 1ᵉʳ REP led the almost bloodless 'Generals' Putsch'. Other units failed to join them; they returned to Zeralda without offering resistance, and on 30 April 1961 the 1st Foreign Legion Paratroops passed into oblivion for the third and final time. They had lost 775 dead and wounded in six years' fighting.

2ᵉ BEP/2ᵉ REP: The 2ᵉ BEP landed at Mers-el-Kébir in November 1955, and, in December, became the 2ᵉ REP, absorbing the effectives of 3ᵉ REP, which had been raised in Algeria in August 1955 and had seen limited action. Between 1956 and 1962 this élite mobile reserve unit saw continual combat operations all over Constantine Province, with brief excursions to other areas. Based at Guelma for much of the war, it played an important part in the battles of the Tunisian Barrage and in the major phases of the 'Challe Plan', such as Operation 'Turquoise'. The cease-fire found it at Telergma; its casualties totalled 598, but it had killed at least 4,000 of the enemy and had captured 4,200 weapons. In September 1962 it moved to Bou-Sfer, and later to Mers-el-

Kébir, and in June 1967 to its new base at Calvi, Corsica.

The Compagnies Sahariennes Portées de la Légion: These deep-desert patrol companies were active throughout the war, guarding the strategic oases on the trans-continental roads and, increasingly, assuring the security of the oil fields of the Sahara. They tended to move north in high summer, taking part in combined operations as conventional motorised or helicopter infantry. Because of the huge distances they covered, they tended to move from base to base across the whole range of the northern Sahara.

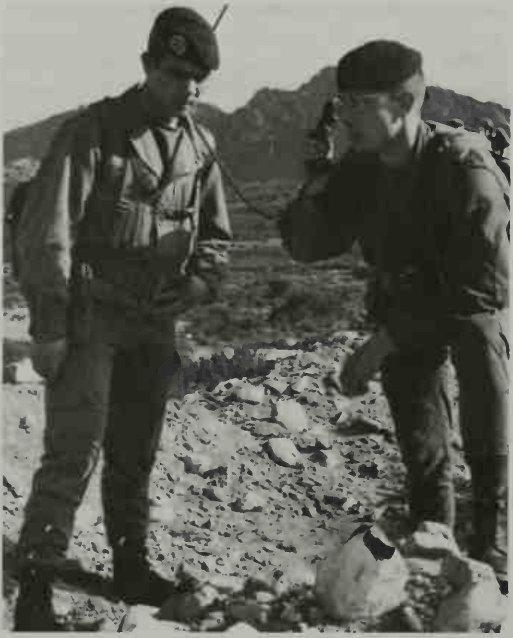
The 1^{er} CSPL was at Ain-Sefra in 1954, moving to Fort Flatters in 1955. The 2^e CSPL was at Laghouat, and the 3^e at Fort Leclerc (Sebha) in the Fezzan. In January 1956 a 4^e CSPL was created from the old 24^e Compagnie Portée of the 1^{er} RE. In January 1961 the 1^{er} became the 1^{er} Escadron PLE, affiliated to the cavalry rather than the infantry.

Since Algeria

Aubagne, near Marseilles, has remained the home of the 1^{er} RE and central services; it houses many mementoes of the old days in Africa, of which the most immediately impressive is the huge Memorial to the Dead, brought from Sidi-bel-Abbès. Apart from the 1^{er} RE is also houses the senior command level, termed from 1973–84 Groupement de la Légion Etrangère and headed by a two-star general. In July 1984, the terminology changed once again, to Commandement de la Légion Etrangère, the commanding general taking the title Commandant (COM.LE).

The 2^e RE, inheritor of the flag and traditions of the 2^e REI, was raised in 1972 in Corsica. Until 1976, it was divided into two autonomous groups: Groupement d'Instruction and Groupement Operationelle de la Légion Etrangère (GILE and GOLE). Each was of roughly battalion strength; GILE was responsible for all basic and much specialist training within the Legion, and GOLE was a 'quick reaction' infantry combat unit. The training companies were moved to the mainland in October 1976; the operational element, which revived the title 2^e REI in June 1980, remained on Corsica.

The 3^e REI, inheritor of the flag and unique triple lanyard of the RMLEs of both World Wars, was based from 1963–73 at Diego-Suarez on Madagascar. It then moved to French Guiana, where it remains today; apart from garrison and construction duties, it provides security for the space launching centre in that colony. A detached company, designated DLEC from 1973–76 and since then DLEM, is supported on Mayotte in the Comores islands off Madagascar.



Two paras of the 2^e REP in Tchad, 1969, display the new M.1964 green fatigues with vertical chest pocket zips (ECPA)

The training element detached from the 2^e RE in 1976 and moved to Castelnaudary in France gave birth to the new Régiment d'Instruction, which inherited the flag and traditions of the old 4^e REI. In June 1980, the RILE was redesignated 4^e RE. In 1984, its higher formation became the new 14^e Division Légère Blindée; in time of mobilisation it would form part of that division's mechanised infantry as the reborn '4^e REI'. A new barracks, Quartier Capitaine-Danjou, was begun in spring 1984.

The old 5^e REI, 'Régiment de Tonkin', which became the 5^e Régiment Mixte du Pacifique in 1963, is still based on and around the French nuclear test site of Mururoa atoll near Tahiti. In July 1984, it was redesignated 5^e RE.

An engineer unit, the 61^e Bataillon Mixte Genie-Légion, was based at Canjuers in Provence from 1971–82. In July 1984, a new regiment, 6^e Régiment Etranger du Genie, was raised; based at Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise, it inherits the flag and traditions of the old 6ᵉ REI, and is an assault enineer unit with wide capabilities.

The 13ᵉ DBLE has remained in Djibouti. A motorised infantry regiment with its own armoured reconnaissance squadron, it is part of the continuing French presence in this strategically important wilderness on 'the Horn of Africa'. Elements of other units, particularly the 1ᵉʳ REC and 2ᵉ REP, rotate through Djibouti on a regular basis.

The 1ᵉʳ REC, based at Orange in the south of France, was until 1984 the armoured element of the 4th Infantry Division. In the 1960s it had a mixed equipment of EBR armoured cars, AMX–13 tanks and missile-armed jeeps. The EBRs and AMXs later gave place to AML–90 and AML–60 armoured cars; there was one complete 'mounted infantry' squadron as well as infantry elements within the three armoured squadrons. In the early 1980s, the AMLs began replacement by the new French AMX–10.RC, a 'wheeled tank' or super-heavy armoured car mounting a 105mm gun; one of the four squadrons has the VAB armoured carrier fitted with HOT anti-armour missiles.

The 2ᵉ REP, based at Calvi, Corsica as part of the 11ᵉ Division Parachutiste since 1967, remains one of France's most effective and famous 'quick reaction' units.

Major changes in French Army organisation in July 1984 involved the Legion in the new 'Rapid Action Force'. A newly formed 6ᵉ Division Légère Blindée now includes in its order of battle the six companies of the 2ᵉ REI, mainly equipped with VAB armoured carriers; the 1ᵉʳ REC (whose previous higher formation, the 4th Division, became the 14th Light Armoured Division); and the 6ᵉ REG. The 2ᵉ REI moved from Corsica to a new depot at the Quartier Vallongue at Nîmes in France.

Operations

Space prevents a detailed account of Legion active service deployments, but the following notes may be helpful:

Tchad

In April 1969, in response to an appeal for help against tribal rebels by President Tombalbaye, the 2ᵉ REP's 1st and 2nd Coys and a tactical HQ flew to Tchad; in September, the 3rd and Recce and Support Coys followed, as did a motorised company (CMLE) drawn from other Legion units. Exhausting operations over huge areas of arid wilderness saw some sharp clashes, which cost the 2ᵉ REP seven dead and about 20 wounded before they were withdrawn in April and December 1970. Small training teams returned to Tchad at intervals, as did troops in company strength to protect French lives in the troubled capital, N'djamena, in 1978–79. Elements of the 2ᵉ REP and 1ᵉʳ REC made precautionary patrols there during the crisis caused by Libyan movements in 1984.

A paratrooper of the 2ᵉ REP armed with a MAT.49: Note rucksack with rolled poncho beneath, and webbing magazine pouch on belt—two of these are normally carried (ECPA)

Djibouti

In February 1976, the 2ᵉ REP's 2nd Coy, the armoured squadron of the 13ᵉ DBLE and a Gendarmerie unit took part in the rescue of a school bus hijacked by Somali terrorists at Loyada on the Somali border; fire was exchanged with Somali troops during the storming of the bus.

Kolwezi

By May 1978, the 2ᵉ REP had become a crack 'para-commando' unit, with highly-trained companies specialising in night, anti-tank, street, amphibious, and mountain fighting, sniping and sabotage; very strong support and recce elements; and HALO-trained pathfinders. It was a logical choice when, that month, the president of Zaire (former Belgian Congo) appealed for help against a rebel force which had invaded Shaba (former Katanga) province and taken over the mining town of Kolwezi, whose inhabitants included some 2,300 white technicians and their families. There was evidence of serious abuse of these helpless prisoners and a real fear of general massacre. In just 56 hours, the 2ᵉ REP's Colonel Erulin got his unit assembled, flown from Corsica to Zaire and prepared for a battalion combat drop from US aircraft, with unfamiliar parachutes, minimal equipment and little idea of what they faced or for how long. Dropping on Kolwezi in two lifts on the morning of 19 May and dawn of the 20th, the Legion paras cleared the town, rescued more than 2,000 hostages and inflicted serious losses on the rebels. Five paras died and 25 were wounded.

Beirut

Elements of the 2e REP served with the multinational peace-keeping forces in Beirut in summer 1982. The following year France's 31e Brigade, an intervention formation commanded by General Coullon, the chief of GLE, served another tour in the war-torn Lebanese capital; it included most of the 2e REI, two squadrons of the 1er REC, and small elements of the 1er and 4e REs.

Lengthy philosophical speculation on the future of the Legion would be out of place here. Suffice it to add that the French Foreign Legion still represents one of the most competent and disciplined of all French combat corps; that it is still composed of men of some 52 nationalities (today, with an unprecedentedly high proportion of British recruits—reportedly, some 800 men); that it still serves in some of France's most inhospitable possessions; and that, since France still has an African empire—*de facto*, if not *de jure*—the chances of her deciding to dispense with this invaluable weapon in the forseeable future are extremely slim.

Uniforms since 1945

North Africa 1945–54

Complete confusion followed the victory in Europe and re-assembly in North Africa. Reorganisation of units, massive expansion, vague and contradictory uniform regulations often completely out of step with the actual resources of the quartermaster branch — these chaotic conditions, in an army which had been divided by years of war, led to unit commanders simply doing their best with the stocks which happened to be available to them. In training units, and in the motorised units which spread out over North Africa, pre-World War II French uniform stocks were used for a considerable time. Otherwise the basic cold-weather uniform was the US Army's 'Class A' Olive Drab, four-pocket, wool tunic and matching trousers, worn for all orders of dress, with a light khaki shirt, and a tie (where appropriate) of khaki, black (for officers) or green. (The green necktie had first been acquired, at unit level, and worn with walking-out dress by the RMLE in Europe in 1944; it would not become official for the whole Legion, officers included, until 1948.) In the immediate post-War period the ranking was officially worn on the shoulderstraps: in chevrons by NCOs, and in bars by officers and *adjudants*.

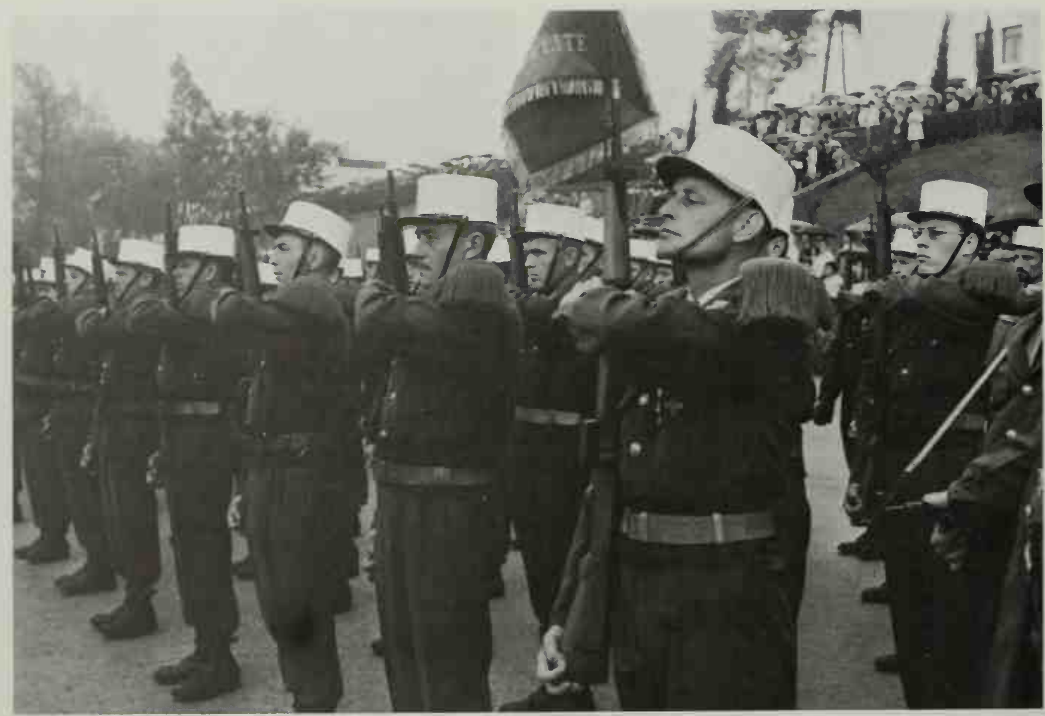
A watercolour by Carles, *L d'O(2)* shows a légionnaire of the Mounted Company, 4e REI, in Morocco in 1948. Presented as if on a patrol from Ksar-es-Souk, he wears a white-covered képi with lowered strap, sand-khaki *cheich*, US uniform with 1946 Legion *écusson* on the left sleeve (see below), pre-1935 French leather equipment, and US wartime webbing gaiters.

In summer the uniform was a light khaki-drill shirt, and either slacks or shorts. At first US 'chinos' and British KD clothing was used, as well as some issue of the Canadian equivalent, which had a slightly greener tinge; gradually French-made copies of these items became available, the colour having a slightly pinker tone.

The black/red képi, with gold or silver details as appropriate, was worn uncovered by officers, *adjudants* and sergeants, and with a white cotton cover by other ranks. (*Caporaux-chef*, although in other respects wearing the insignia of *hommes du rang*, have worn the uncovered képi since the early post-War years.)

Far-reaching uniform and insignia regulations of 1946, although slow and uneven in their adoption, gradually imposed uniformity. From 1947 the cold-weather uniform began to be the new 1946 French battledress blouse and trousers, which resembled British style and colour; the collar was open with notched lapels, the pockets were pleated, and the trousers lacked the large thigh pocket of the British model. Uniform buttons, now anodised instead of brass, were worn on the blouse. Officers and *adjudants* also wore the battledress.

On the battledress a new branch-of-service *écusson* was worn on the upper left sleeve. A blue-black diamond, it was edged with three green



Aubagne, 1965—the 1er RE parade in the winter uniform of *képi*, battledress, epaulettes, blue sash, brown leather belt, and black *rangers*. The *sergent-chef* carrying the company *fanion* in the foreground wears a white *képi*-cover for parades with troops; note also his gold-bordered 'second' chinstrap, and the plain black extra chinstraps of the men (ECPA)

pipings, and bore the seven-flame grenade in green for troops, in gold for sergeants, and in gold bullion-and-sequin fancy embroidery for officers and *adjudants*. Slight variations of detail were attributable to different unit fashions and different makers.

Officers and *adjudants* wore ranking on the shoulders. From 1948 a stiff blue-black shoulderboard was worn, slipped over the shoulderstraps of the BD blouse, and the shirtsleeve uniform in summer. This had gold or silver rank stripes across the outer end in the usual sequence, a gilt button, three chevrons of green piping at the inner end, and in the centre (officially in green but, from the first, almost invariably in gold) the seven-flame grenade. For working and combat dress simple braid loops on blue-black backing were still worn on the shoulderstraps.

Enlisted ranks acquired these shoulderboards later, without the ranking, and with green grenades for troops and gold ones for sergeants. They seem to have been introduced unevenly from unit to unit, starting in the late 1940s, but were in general use with walking-out dress — BD or shirt sleeve — by the mid-1950s.

Ranking for enlisted grades appeared on both upper sleeves in the form of small chevrons, point upwards, in green, gold and/or silver as appropriate. One and two green chevrons identified *soldat de 1^{ere} classe* and *caporal* or *brigadier*; two green below one gold or silver, *caporal-chef* or *brigadier-chef*; two gold or silver, *sergent* or *maréchal des logis*. Three and four chevrons in gold or silver identified the *sergent-chef* and *sergent-chef-major* and the cavalry equivalents. (The latter rank was phased out in the late 1960s.)

From 1948 service chevrons began to reappear in miniature form, worn point-down immediately below the sleeve *écusson* on the left and the ranking on the right sleeves, being worked directly onto the midnight blue backing of these insignia in green, gold or silver according to rank; they were not worn by officers and *adjudants*.

For parades, enlisted ranks embellished the battledress and the summer shirtsleeve uniform with *epaulettes de tradition,* blue sash, and in some cases whitened webbing — this latter was at unit choice. Although sashes seem to have been in fairly good supply even in 1945 — the RMLE wore them that summer — there appears to have been rather a shortage of epaulettes for some time after the war; and such niceties as epaulettes with gold thread in the crescents for sergeants vanished for a while.

Unit badges were worn, at first pinned to the breast pockets and later hung on a leather fob from the pocket button, with most orders of dress. In the late 1940s they seem sometimes to have been worn on the left, although the right was always more usual.

Where appropriate, unit *fourragères* were worn looped around the left shoulder for service dress and walking-out, and looped across from the armpit to the second front button for parade. There seems to have been some use, in the post-War period, of the *Croix de Guerre 1939–45* lanyard by the 1er and 4^{e} REIs, whose personnel won this honour in the *régiments de marche* in Tunisia in 1943. The other regiments in North Africa at this period, the 6^{e} REI, 2^{e} REC and 3^{e} BEP, did not wear *fourragères.*

Indo-China 1946–54

Photographs of this campaign present a picture of total chaos in the article of uniform — a wholly accurate picture, one might add. Only the broadest generalisations are possible.

The RMLE-EO, later 2^{e} REI, arrived entirely uniformed and equipped by the British Army: battledress, khaki drill, webbing, and small-arms. The only French items were *képis,* sidecaps of green and red worn by most officers, warrant officers and sergeants, and an issue of the French *casque colonial.* Shortly afterwards the 3^{e} REI landed, entirely uniformed in US Army items, with US webbing and weapons. These two pieces of information should be taken as symbolic of this war . . . With the gradual arrival of other Legion units a very wide range of outfits were observed. The tropical shirtsleeve uniforms, worn almost always, by almost all units, for almost all orders of dress and duties, were of mixed British, US, French pre-war and French post-war stocks. One veteran recalls wearing some left-over Japanese items; and local black or blue cloth, made up into *keos,* shorts, or loose trousers, was by no means unusual as fatigue and off-duty wear. There were four basic types of uniform:

Parade Dress: In winter, in the colder highlands, the 1946 battledress as in North Africa, with the *képi,* blue sash, and green and red epaulettes. Webbing of British or US patterns, often whitened for colour parties and honour guards; white gloves or gauntlets often worn by former. More usually, throughout Indo-China, shirtsleeve uniform, as African summer dress: KD shirt with short or rolled sleeves and open neck, KD slacks, and parade embellishments as above. In winter BD the shirt collar was sometimes opened outside the blouse collar, sometimes worn with a tie. In the 2^{e} REI, 1946–49, officers, *adjudants* and NCO section leaders wore the green and red sidecap not only as undress wear, but also on parade instead of the *képi.*

Walking-out Dress: As parade dress but no sash or epaulettes, and normally with slacks hanging loose to instep over black shoes. For evening walking-out the shirt collar was normally closed and a tie added, tucked between second and third shirt buttons, and the sleeves were rolled down and buttoned. Officers and NCOs could wear shorts for daytime walking-out, worn with long white socks and low shoes; both khaki drill and white versions of this outfit were common, worn with either *képi* or sidecap. Again, in cold weather the khaki battledress was occasionally seen, often with the open shirt collar folded outside it.

Barracks and Fatigue Dress: Enormously varied, due to different stocks for different units, different climate in various regions, etc. Usually, khaki drill bush-shirt, rolled sleeves, open neck, worn inside or loose over KD shorts or KD slacks. The green fatigue uniform (see below) became very common in the second half of the war. Headgear was normally the khaki drill bush-hat, which became the trademark of French troops in this war, and was often worn with the sides of the brim held up, cowboy-fashion, by the cloth chin-tapes tied on top of the crown. The 1935 colonial helmet saw some use in the 1940s, but not much. It often bore a rather attractive badge on the front, from about 1948: a brass seven-flame grenade with the 'bomb' divided diagonally green and red.

A common alternative to the bush-hat was the khaki drill beret, of material similar to that of shirt and shorts. This was a kind of 'general service' headgear, worn by many branches of the French Army and their Vietnamese satellites. In the Legion it might be seen without insignia, or with the brass grenade off the *casque colonial,* or with non-regulation unit insignia, locally ordered. It was popular, for practical reasons, in the 1er REC and its Amphibious Groups; two silver badges are known, one a copy of the 1^er^ REC breast badge, and one a larger version of the crab-and-grenade breast badges of the Groupements Amphibies — see photographs of breast badges in this chapter. The 5^e^ REI and 13^e^ DBLE each had their own slightly-differing beret grenades with regimental numbers on the 'bombs' — both in silver, interestingly enough. In the final stages of the war there may have been some use of the new 1952 brass grenade badges with regimental numbers on the 'bombs' (see Algeria section below).

Footwear came from many sources, but conventional laced leather ankle boots of French, British or US model were the norm. They were worn in the earliest stages of the war with web gaiters, when in long trousers, but this nicety did not last long. Usually they were worn with shorts, and with ankle-socks turned down over them. An equally common alternative was the canvas and rubber jungle boot, resembling a basket-ball boot; these were called '*pataugas*' — 'splashers' or 'paddlers'. Sandals were also common.

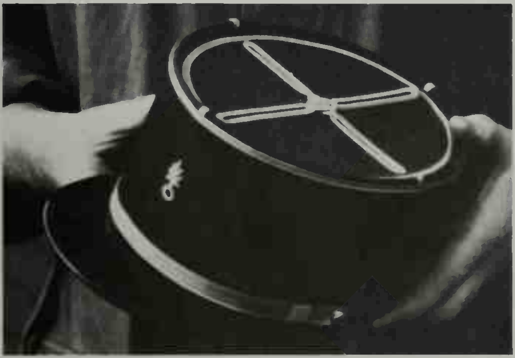
Combat Dress: In the 1940s most operations were essentially local and of short duration, and heavy equipment was seldom carried for road-opening patrols, local sweeps, convoy escort, or sector defence. Combat dress was simply barracks or fatigue dress with the addition of light belt equipment and weapons. Webbing — British, US, even some Japanese, and later French 'M.1950 TAP' — was extremely mixed, but US patterns were the normal issue in the 1950s. Some French brown leather equipment was seen: usually frame-buckled belts, and in later years magazine pouches for the MAT.49 sub-machine gun. The normal headgear was the bush-hat. Metal unit breast-fob badges were not unknown.

From about 1950 the general issue of the M.1946 green fatigue suit (see Plate 25, fig. 78) brought a gradually more uniform appearance to troops on operations. It was worn with the bush-hat or, increasingly, with the US M.1 steel helmet, as clashes with Giap's regulars began to involve serious positional fighting from 1950 on. It was normally buttoned at the ankle, giving a loose, baggy 'pull-down' over the boot; web anklets were no longer worn. Longer-range operations required packs — the rucksack type became the norm towards the end of the war, but there was wide use of the British and US wartime styles also. Insignia were kept to a minimum on combat fatigues; officers wore ranking loops around their shoulder-straps, or tabs fixed to the front of the jacket, usually between the left breast pocket and the front edge. NCOs often pinned or hooked the sleeve *écusson* and chevrons from the left arm of walking-out and parade dress to the left breast pocket of the combat jacket, below the flap and partly covered by it — and it was common to see the insignia worn upside down here, so that the chevrons showed clearly.

Legion infantry NCO's *képi* of the 1950s; *garance* top piped dark blue, midnight blue body, gold chinstrap and grenade, the latter without lower flames recurving

Vietnamese recruited in complete sub-units in accordance with Gen de Lattre's policy — e.g. the V/3^e^ REI, raised in 1950, which later split off to become the 76th Vietnamese Bn — wore a version of Legion uniform. The sleeve *écusson* was worn, but there seems to have been a reluctance to extend the honour of the *képi* to men who were not subject to the traditional terms of Legion enlistment. There has been mention of white berets worn for parade and '*sortie*' instead of *képis,* and some photographs clearly show this; but Charle Milassin states, from first-hand experience, that these were the normal khaki drill general service berets washed and bleached until white. On the other hand, individual Asiatics who enlisted under the normal terms do not seem to have been subject to any discrimination. (It is interesting to note that quite large numbers of Vietnamese accompanied the Legion when it returned to Algeria in 1954–55, either enlisted in its ranks or 'adopted' as semi-official 'auxiliary companies', which fought alongside their adoptive regiments against the ALN.)

The proliferation of metal unit insignia in this period matched the proliferation of units; some rifle regiments had specific insignia for sub-units even down to company level, and the total number of badges was swollen by the creation of exotica such as river boat companies, engineer and service



Legion infantry *sous-lieutenant's képi* of the late 1970s; the knot is of the simple, cruciform type

companies, an air-despatch company, and even an armoured train! In addition, some Legion battalions had metal insignia made up for their locally-recruited auxiliaries — the *compagnie des suppletifs*, or *commando,* which was such a typical feature of this campaign. Note that detached Legion companies affiliated to the engineer, transport and supply branches wore silver buttons and lace, like the cavalry, in place of infantry gold.

The appearance of Legion para battalions brought a further touch of variety. Their parade and walking-out dress was the same as that of Legion infantry. Their field and undress headgear was a dark green beret, pulled left in the usual French style; the silver badge of the Metropolitan units of Chasseurs Parachutistes was worn. In action they wore the bush-hat or the US steel helmet — with the normal infantry strapping seeming more frequent in photographs than the airborne A-straps and chin-cup. Their combat dress was a mixture of US wartime issue camouflage clothing, British 1942 windproof camouflage dress and the standard French green fatigues. Whole suits of each were sometimes worn, but more often the spotted US camouflage jacket with the French green or British streaked camouflage trousers. Shortly before the battle of Dien Bien Phu, in late 1953, both battalions and the 1^{e} CEPML received streaky French airborne camouflage uniform 'M.1947/52 TAP'. A bush hat of similar streaked camouflage material was also seen in this period. (Interestingly, the dark green beret was not 'official' until 1957.)

Personal weapons used during the war were a mixture of US and French types, with a good deal of British issue in the late 1940s; photographs show both 2^{e} REI and 13^{e} DBLE patrols armed with .303 Lee-Enfields, Stens, and Brens. The French MAS.36 rifle and its folding-stock CR.39 derivative, the US .30 cal. M1 and M1A1 carbines, the Thompson and, later, the MAT.49 sub-machine guns, and FM.24/29, Browning .30 cal. and Browning .50 cal. machine guns — these were the normal issue. Support weapons such as mortars, recoilless rifles, etc tended to be of US issue; forts often mounted a more arcane selection of heavy weapons. (It is ironic that the Viet Minh, supplied by Red China with US weapons captured in Korea, often had newer models than the French, who were still receiving World War II surplus.)

The *fourragères* worn by units engaged in Indo-China — and worn from then on, unless replaced by the lanyards of a higher award — were as follows:

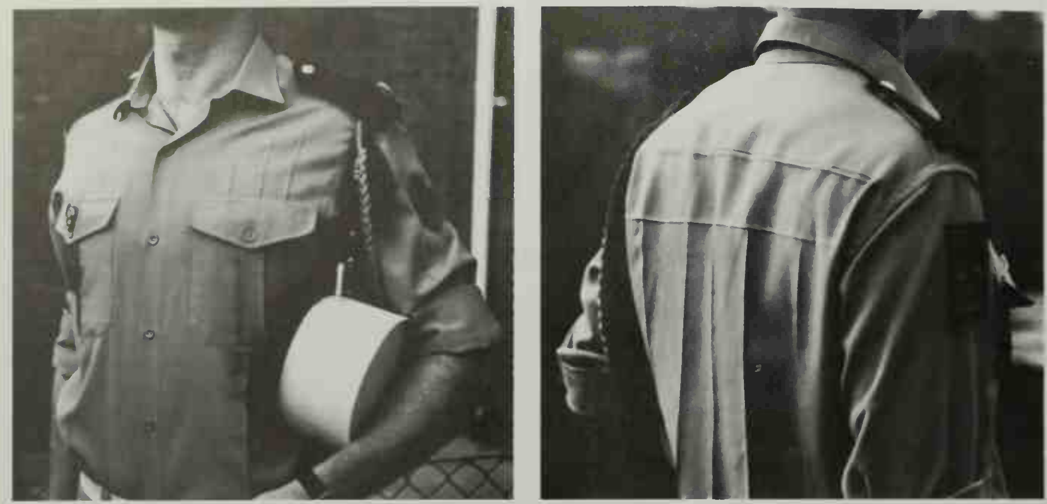
2^{e} REI	*Croix de Guerre TOE,* from 1948
3^{e} REI	Triple — *C de G 1914–18, Médaille Militaire, Légion d'honneur,* from 1945 — see under Plate 30, fig. 95 for detail of 'olives'
5^{e} REI	*C de G TOE,* from 1950
13^{e} DBLE	*MM* with *C de G 1939–45* 'olive', from 1945; and *C de G/C de G TOE* double 'olive' from 1953
1er REC	*C de G 1939–45* from 1945; double, with *C de G TOE,* from 1952

Both 1er and 2^{e} BEPs were awarded the *TOE* in 1951, and the *MM* in 1953. On re-formation the 2^{e} BEP were awarded the *fourragère* of the *Légion d'honneur,* in summer 1954, shortly before being raised to regimental status.

Algeria 1954–62

Combat dress at the start of the Algerian war was much like that worn in the latter stages of the Indo-China campaign. The green M.1946 French fatigue suit was almost universal. It was worn either with the white *képi* (seen in the field surprisingly often in the first few years of the war), the bush-hat or the khaki drill beret. Officers often wore a khaki drill cover over the *képi,* with cut-outs to expose the gold grenade and a section of rank lace (see Plate 27, fig 85). Steel helmets of US and, later, French type were issued, and occasionally worn when heavy fighting was expected, as on the Moroccan and Tunisian Barrages at times of major infiltration attempts; but the helmet spent most of its time slung from the belt, if carried at all.

The range of temperatures in Algeria is even greater than in Vietnam, and the green fatigues were worn either next to the skin, or over shirts and sweaters, depending on season. A collarless,



The shirt sleeve summer uniform of a trooper of the 1er REC displays the special creases which have to be pressed into the shirt after each washing, and the shoulder patch of the 4th Division—a rectangular shield vertically halved red (left) and green, outlined gold, bearing in gold capitals '*Ne Pas Subir*' in an arc over the four gold playing-card symbols arranged in a diamond shape centrally, the whole on a black backing. The new 14e DLB, and thus the 4e RE have worn this patch since mid-1984.

single-breasted, quilted, green wind-jacket/liner was often worn under the fatigue jacket. The *cheich* was quite widely worn, particularly in motorised units; and so was the native *djellabah*, in striped patterns of black, white, brown, grey, green or yellow — this voluminous robe, with a deep hood, was warm, hard-wearing, and gave surprisingly good camouflage (see Plate 28, fig. 88).

Webbing equipment was still rather mixed, with US patterns being worn alongside French M.1950 sets. Pre-World War II French leather belts, Y-straps and pouches were not unknown in the 1950s; the 1946 leather set, in light orange-brown, was issued in some, but not apparently very many units. Both leather and webbing pouches of French make for MAT.49 magazines were very common. One US item at first used, and then directly copied in improved form by the French was the two-buckle combat boot with built-in ankle-flap — known in the French Army as '*rangers*'. This first became general issue in about 1958, first in brown over-polished black, and later, in about 1969, made in black. Canvas and rubber *pataugas* were a common alternative in Algeria. The rucksack pack was standard issue.

Insignia were kept to a minimum. Ranking for NCOs was usually worn in the form of green and gold or silver diagonals on a blue tab fixed from the jacket front edge to the left breast pocket. The use of the sleeve *écusson* and chevrons actually fixed in place on the combat jacket was not common, but not unknown; neither was the fixing of *écusson* and chevrons to the breast pocket. Officers usually wore shoulderstrap loops, in cloth or, increasingly, as gold or silver clips.

Legion paratroopers were issued the French streaked-camouflage airborne troops' combat fatigues from the start of the war, wearing them with the same range of supplementary items, equipment and insignia as the infantry. The camouflage smock and trousers appeared in several slightly varying versions during the later 1950's. The green beret was worn with all dress orders except parade and walking-out, and was normally worn on operations; indeed, so formidable was the reputation of the '*beret verts*' that on occasions they were ordered to were khaki berets, in order to tempt the *fellaghas* into making contact with these supposed national servicemen!

In 1959 the green beret was authorised as the *tenue de repos* and field headgear of the whole Legion, the *képi* being reserved for walking-out, service dress and parades. Infantry and cavalry units and CSPLs wore it at first with the gold or silver cut-out grenade badges, M.1952, with regimental or company number on the 'bomb', in the latter case surrounded by the letters C S P L in a square. By the end of the war the standard 1960 cap badge design was in general use: an open circle with the seven-flame grenade central, without unit number. There were some unit variations. The 2^{e} REI, recalling the old *compagnies montées*, wore a grenade and number superimposed on a horseshoe, cut out, all in silver. The cavalry regiments had their numbers on the grenade 'bomb', and the grenades off-set to the right side of the ring. The 1er ESPL had a ring with a large central Cross of Agadès, with a grenade and '1' superimposed, all in silver. The para regiments retained the airborne troops' winged fist holding a dagger, in silver.

In 1960 the camouflage fatigues were authorised as field dress for all Legion regiments, and they had generally been adopted by the end of the war; this '*toutes armes*' type had concealed buttons rather than zip-fasteners and pocket-snaps, and buttoned storm-tabs at wrist and ankle rather than elastics. Late in the war a green zipped woollen cardigan jacket was issued for winter use, worn under the fatigues with its broad collar folded outside.

For the first few years of the war there was little change in the service, parade and walking-out uniform. In winter this was the battledress of the October 1946 regulations, worn with the *képi* covered or uncovered according to rank, a light khaki shirt and a green tie. For parades the green and red fringed epaulettes and the sash were added, and the trousers were worn either with webbing gaiters of British or, more usually, cut-down US pattern, or, later, bloused into *rangers*. For walking out the stiff blue-black shoulderboards were worn, and the trousers were loose over shoes. The summer equivalent uniforms were based on the shirt and slacks in light khaki drill, with the same embellishments. The belt worn with the khaki drill slacks in walking-out and service dress was based on the US pattern, a narrow webbing item with a buckle-plate in gold or silver according to branch. On the shirtsleeve uniform all insignia were hooked temporarily rather than sewn.

During the Algerian war the battledress and shirt acquired a feature that still torments the légionnaire today: a set of sixteen pointless but decorative creases on breast, back and sleeves.

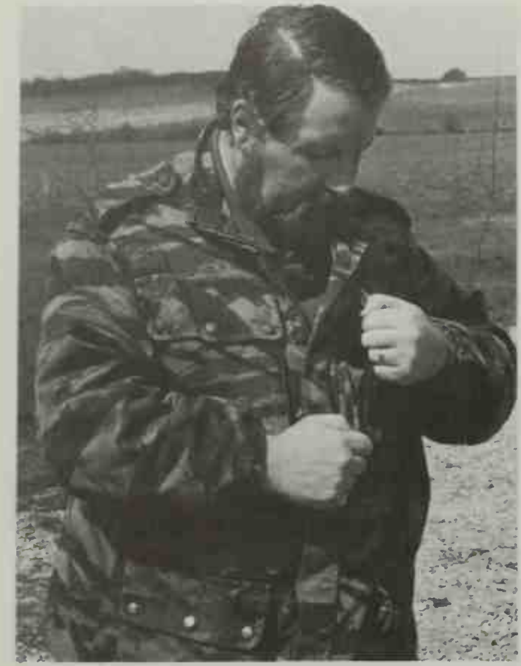
The leather fob on which unit badges were hung from the right breast pocket button changed from brown to green with red stitching. In the cavalry, from the late 1950s, it became common for the regimental badge to be worn on the fob, and the squadron badge on the left shoulderboard, for walking-out dress; for everyday service dress the squadron badge alone was worn on the fob; and for parade the squadron badge was pinned on the breast above the regimental badge on the fob.

During the late 1950s and 1960s most regiments wore the unit number in the 'bomb' of the grenade on the sleeve *écusson*. It also became common for *caporaux-chef* to have the grenade on the *écusson*, and sometimes on the shoulderboards, in yellow or white thread (depending on branch) and any re-enlistment chevrons below the *écusson* matching. (The former practice has now been abandoned, the latter is still seen in some units.)

From 1956 officers and *adjudants* wore a new and rather more modern-looking winter service tunic. This retained the open notched collar and four pockets, and was worn with straight trousers and — now officially — the green waistcoat, popular for decades, two or three buttons' depth of which is visible in the neck of the tunic. The trousers retained the very dark brown stripes, 50mm wide, for officers and the 5mm dark brown piping for *adjudants*. On the tunic were worn the blue shoulderboards, pentagonal blue collar *écussons* bearing a gold grenade beneath three green chevrons, and normal unit insignia in the way of fob-badges and *fourragères*. The left sleeve *écusson* was not worn. Battledress was still worn when parading with troops.

In 1960 came the first issue of a new winter service and walking-out dress for enlisted ranks. This was a khaki four-pocket tunic and straight slacks, not unlike the officers' pattern in cut, worn without a belt. Shoulderboards, *fourragères*, sleeve *écussons* and ranking, and unit pocket-fob badges were worn exactly as on the battledress, which was reserved for parades; sergeants and above now wore the pentagonal collar *écussons* previously worn only by officers and *adjudants*, instead of the diamond-shaped sleeve *écusson*. (Some officers, *adjudants*, sergeants, and in isolated cases even *caporaux-chef* made unofficial use of the blue pentagonal collar *écussons* on the battledress blouse, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s.)

The paratroop regiments followed contemporary French practice during the Algerian war in that they often paraded in camouflage fatigues and green berets, embellished with decorations, *fourragères*, and such 'fantasies' as fancy ladder-lacing in their jump-boots, and white belts and gauntlets for colour-parties. The traditional epaulettes and blue sash were not generally worn with this outfit, nor was the *képi*. This was a temporary fashion, at a time when the '*tenue léopard*' of the paratrooper was a powerful image in the French mind; it never



The 1956 version of the airborne camouflaged jacket, worn by the Legion parachute units from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Note pocket and zip details (R.G.Windrow)

officially replaced Legion parade dress proper.

The Compagnies Sahariennes had their own special uniforms, apart from the battledress and four-pocket tunic for wear in temperate zones. Their parade dress consisted of the *képi*, covered or not as appropriate; a white tunic, with short sleeves for enlisted ranks of the 1st and 2nd Companies, and long for the other companies and all officers and *adjudants;* baggy, many-pleated *seroual* trousers of black or white, worn with a pair of *naïls*; a double *burnous*; and Y-shaped leather bandoliers worn over crossed blue sashes. (See also Plate 29.) The *burnous* was often discarded in high summer.

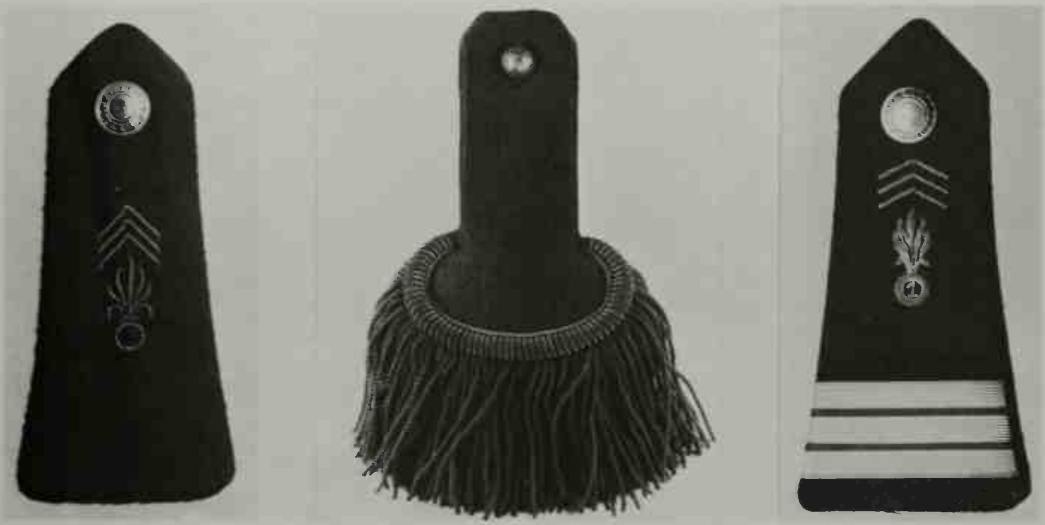
In the field there were special winter and summer uniforms. For cold weather the battledress blouse was worn with *serouals* of similar cloth, US-style web anklets, and boots. The *képi*, with a pale khaki cover, the *cheich,* and the *djellabah* completed the uniform (see Plate 28, fig. 88). In summer a pale khaki drill *gandourah*, very similar to that of the old mounted cavalry, was worn next to the skin, with rolled sleeves, and the *cheich* at the throat; a khaki-drill version of the *serouals* were worn with *naïls*. In the field conventional leather or webbing belt equipment was normal. When operating as infantry in more northern areas the CSPLs drew conventional combat dress — green or camouflaged fatigues, green berets, etc.

The Legion since Algeria

The appearance of the légionnaire has undergone few radical changes since 1962.

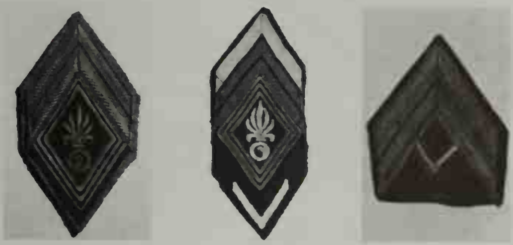
Combat Dress: Regiments based in Europe discarded the camouflage fatigues in the mid-1960s in favour of the French Army's M.1964 green fatigues, made from a material designated *Treillis Satin 300*. It is most easily identified by vertical breast pocket zips. Those worn by the Legion have an alteration rarely seen in other corps: jackets are cut short to hip length and elasticated at the waist, to give a trimmer appearance, and trousers are tightly tapered (see Plate 32, fig. 102). Ranking is worn, in the usual form of short green, gold or silver diagonals, on small ground-colour tabs fixed to the left breast 'inboard' of the pocket by 'velcro'. Officers' horizontal ranking is supposed to be worn in the same way, but shoulderstrap loops of either braid or metal are still popular. In recent years name tabs have been worn above the right pocket, black capitals on a white strip, when not 'tactical'. The M.1951 French steel helmet replaced the last US models in the 1960s. The 1er REC has a special helmet liner which can be worn with or without the steel shell — more usually, without. It has fittings for the attachment of a headset and goggles. Normal working and field headgear is the green beret, with the 1960 badge. The 2^{e}REP still wears the airborne badge. The 1er Escadron, 1er REC wears its silver badge with a '1' in the 'bomb' and the grenade off-set to the right of the ring, commemorating the Algerian days.

In South America, East Africa and the Pacific the combat dress is either a slightly more neatly tailored and lighter version of the 1960s '*toutes armes*' camouflage suit; an olive short-sleeved shirt and shorts; or a sleeveless vest, fastened by side straps, with the shorts. (The camouflage jacket is sometimes worn with the shorts.) In the tropics the khaki drill bush-hat is sometimes worn as an alternative to the green beret. A mixture of leather M.1946 and webbing M.1950 (recently, the new M.1974) equipment is to be seen, the former normally being issued to units whose primary task is not infantry combat, and to recruits—in the latter case, this is doubtless a sadistic plan to give them something more to be polished bright at every opportunity.



Shoulderboards of a légionnaire (*left*) and a captain (*right*). The enlisted men have all green embroidery; the officers, green chevrons, with gold grenade and ranking. Those of NCOs are described in the text. The *epaulette de tradition* of an infantry senior NCO (*centre*) has a green strap, red fringe, and mixed red and gold crescent.

Barracks and Working Dress: In Europe, the green fatigues; in the tropics, olive or khaki drill short-sleeved shirt and shorts. The *képi* is worn when not in working dress. Since about 1964 ranks below *caporal-chef* have not been issued the black/red *képi* but one made of light khaki material, still worn with a white cover. Since the early 1970s individuals can replace this at their option and expense with a one-piece, all-white *képi* — a worthwhile buy, given the fiendish difficulty of getting a newly-washed and spotless white cover back on to the *képi* without stains or wrinkles!



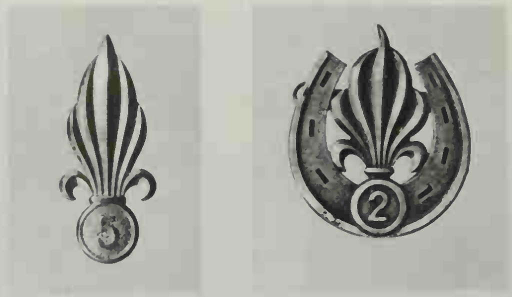
Legion Chevrons and sleeve *écussons*. *Left*: Chevrons and *écusson* of a *caporal*, 1960s, with regimental cypher; all green embroidery on midnight blue. *Centre:* Left arm insignia of a *caporal-chef*: one gold above two green chevrons; *écusson* with gold grenade, green pipings; yellow re-enlistment chevron, all on midnight blue. *Right*: Right arm chevrons of *caporal rengagé*, with re-enlistment chevron, all green on midnight blue

Tenue de Tradition: In Europe in winter, 1946 battledress of khaki wool serge was worn only for parades up 1979, when photographs show the first use of the four-pocket service tunic with the traditional epaulettes and sash (see Plate 31, fig.99). The battledress disappeared entirely in 1980/81, only to reappear in a lighter 'Tergal' version in 1985. The *képi* is fitted with a second chin-strap, worn down, for parade dress; NCOs still have special gold details on their epaulette crescents and chin-straps. Types of belt worn with parade dress have varied from time to time and unit to unit; photographs show webbing, both green and whitened, and brown or white leather; the latter seems most usual. For major reviews all personnel may wear white cotton gloves; sappers, colour parties, etc. wear white gauntlets, and sometimes white webbing anklets. In summer the traditional parade embellishments are added to the shirt-sleeve uniform.

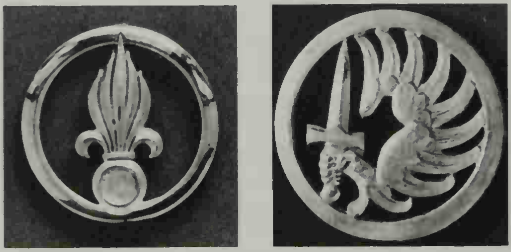
Service and Walking-out Dress: In winter the *képi* is worn with four-pocket tunic and straight trousers, which since 1968 have been of the greenish khaki 'Tergal' material. In summer the shirtsleeve uniform is worn, in daytime with the collar open and the sleeves rolled, and after 7pm with the green tie and the sleeves buttoned. Insignia worn with these uniforms are as described earlier — shoulderboards, badges, sleeve *écussons*, ranking, etc, and, where appropriate, a divisional patch on the right shoulder (see under Plate 31). In the tropics shorts are worn with long white socks for daytime walking-out, and slacks for the evening.

Officers and *adjudants* wear the four-button, four-pocket service uniform described earlier; there is a pale stone-coloured summer version which lacks the trouser striping but bears all other insignia in common with the winter version (see Plate 30). Their *képis* still bear gold knots on the top surface, in either a plain cruciform or the more decorative traditional style, to individual taste. Until 1979, Legion officers retained the battledress for parades with troops; thereafter, photographs show the first use of the four-button tunic, with pistol-belt and with trousers bloused into combat boots. Officers also have a white tropical service and walking-out uniform.

Since the 1960s the standard weapons carried by the Legion have been the MAS.49/56 semi-automatic rifle with integral grenade-launcher, the MAT.49 sub-machine gun, the AA.52 general purpose machine gun, and the 89mm LRAC anti-tank rocket launcher. The new FAMAS assault rifle has completely replaced the MAS.49/56 and MAT.49 since 1980, beginning with the 2e REP; only 1er REC crews retain MAT.49s.



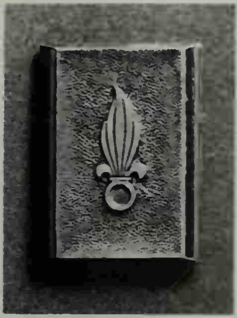
Left: Legion infantry beret badge of the type worn in the last three years of the Algerian War; gold, with regimental cypher. *Right*: The special silver beret badge adopted by the 2e REI at that time (Aldo Gevi)



Left: Regulation beret badge worn by Legion infantry since early 1960s. *Right:* Metropolitan airborne troops' beret badge worn by BEPs and REPs since their formation, in silver (photographs not to constant scale—the badges are the same size)

Note: The photographs on the opposite and following pages represent a small selection of the major Legion unit breast badges. Dates refer to known use of the particular insignia, not necessarily to the formation/disbandment of the unit. In many cases a number of patterns are known, varying in slight details. They are not photographed to a constant scale (All courtesy the R. G. Windrow collection)

1: *Dépôt Commun, 1950–55; later, Inspection Technique*. Silver, green-red stripes each side. **2:** *1er REI, 1940–55*. Green (L) and red (R) shield, gold globe, silver grenade. **3:** *Groupement Autonome, 1950–55; 1er RE, 1955 to present.* White ground, red (L top to R bottom) and green saltire, black eagle, green snake. **4:** *2e REI, 1947–57*. Green shield, gold dragon, red grenade and cypher. **5:** *2e REI, 1957 to present*. Silver, green-red stripes each side. **6:** *3e REI, 1928 – earliest known insignia*. Silver; red 'bomb'. **7:** *3e REI, 1946–48*. Silver ground, central plaque green (L) and red (R), gold grenade, gold lettering on black strip. **8:** *3e REI, 1954 to present*. Gold, green (L) and red (R) plaque, gold grenade, black incised lettering. **9:** *Détachement Légion Etrangère Comores, 1960s–70s*. Gold, white motif, black incised lettering. **10:** *4e REI, 1937 onwards, numerous variants*. Silver, red (L) and green (R) stripes. **11:** *4e DBLE, Madagascar 1947–49*. Gold; green border; red island; busts in gold, blue, and red (L), gold and white (R). **12:** *2e Cie Portée du 4e REI, 1955–64*. Blue, white, horseshoe silver. **13:** *5e REI, 1949–55*. Silver (1949–51) or gold (1951–55); green outer and red inner rims. **14:** *5e REI, 1956–63*. Black, white map, red grenade, green 'bomb', gold details. **15:** *5e Régiment Mixte du Pacifique, 1963 to present*. Gold and black. **16:** *6e REI, 1940–41, 1947–55*. Silver, green (top) and red stripes



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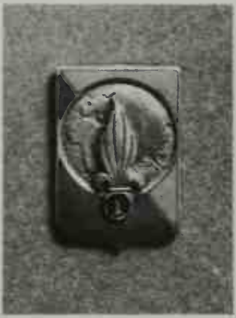

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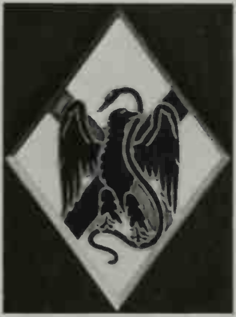

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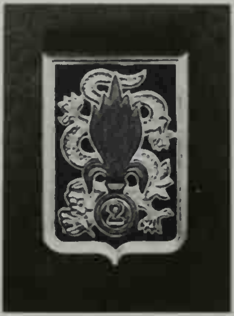

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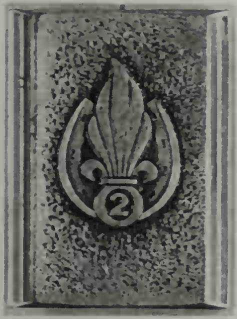

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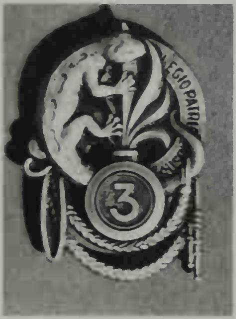
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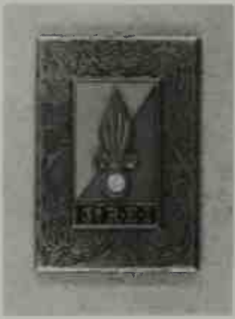

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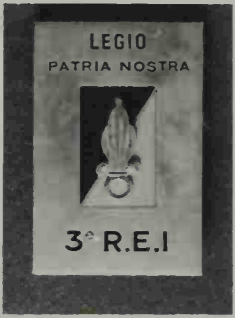
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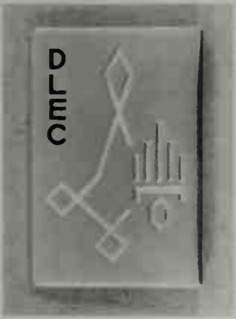

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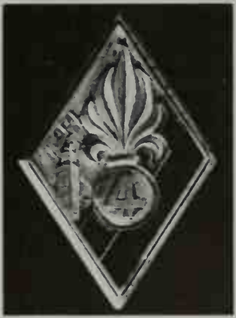

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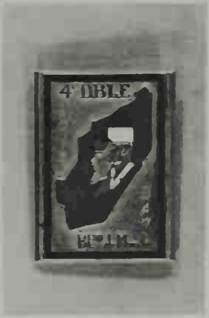

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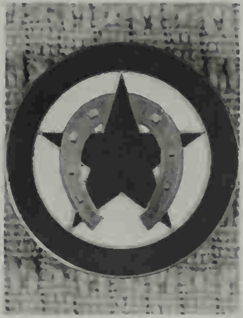

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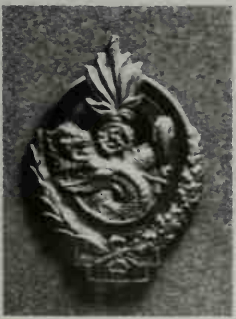

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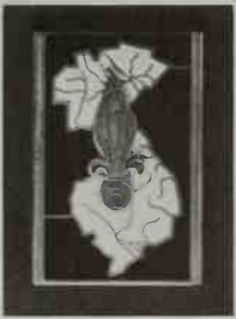

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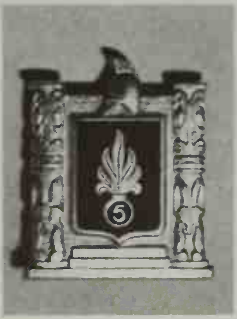

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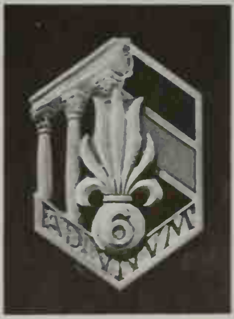

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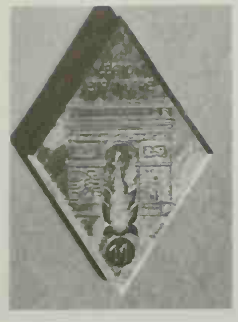

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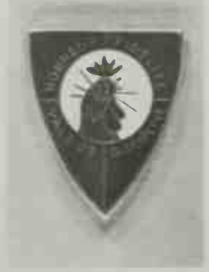

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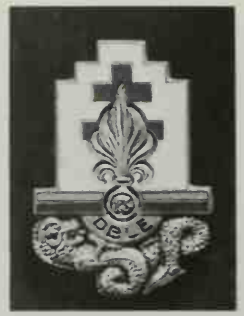

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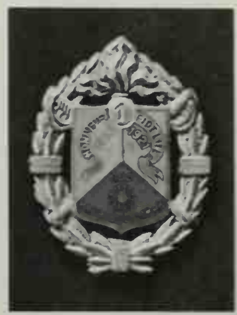
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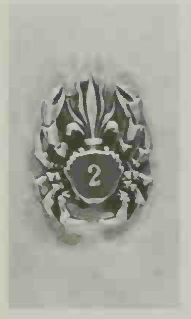

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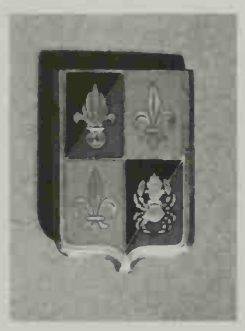

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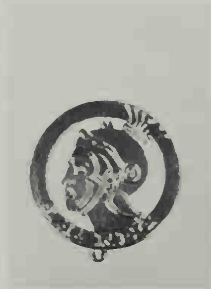

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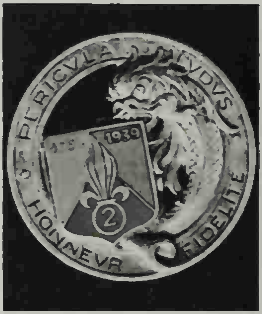
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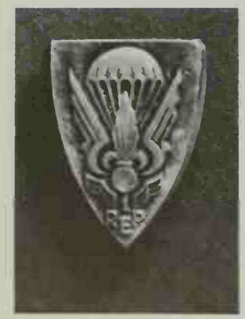

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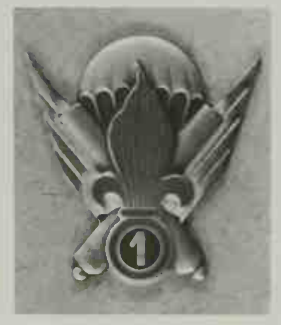

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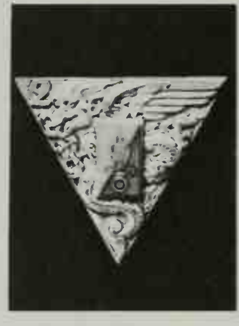

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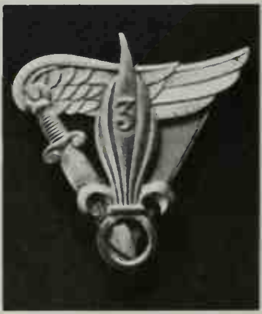

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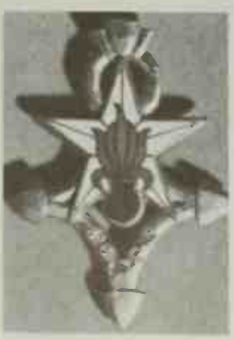

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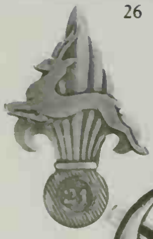

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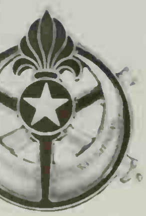

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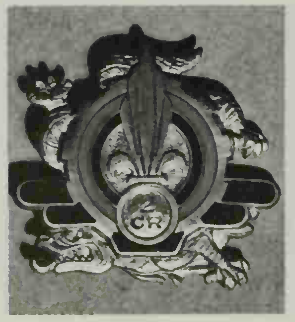

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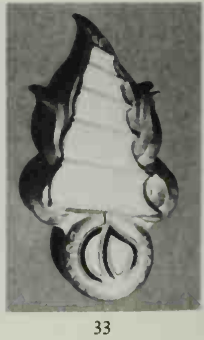

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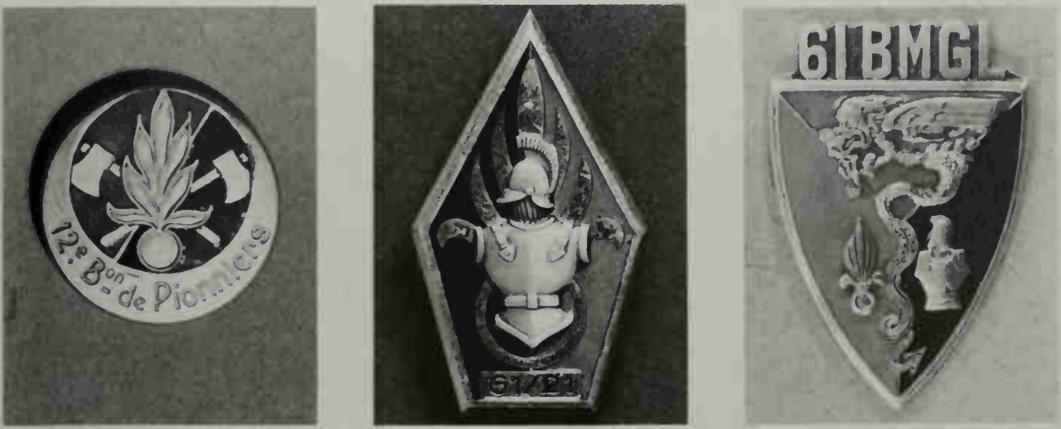

Left: Insignia of the 12e Bn de Pionniers du 1er REI, raised in 1939 as a specialist supporting unit for the new regiments in Metropolitan France, and disbanded in 1940. Gold, with red (L) and green (R) central ground. *Centre:* One of the specialist units raised during the Indo-China War was the 21er Cie, 61e Bn du Génie. This variant of its handsome badge was worn 1950–54. Green (L) and red (R) ground, gold grenade and details, silver helm and cuirass. *Right:* The badge of the 61e Bn Mixte Génie/Légion, 1971–82, in red, green and black with gold details (R.G.Windrow)

17: *11e REI, 1939–40.* Silver. Variant has red flames, green 'bomb'. **18:** *12e REI, 1939–40.* Quartered shield green (top L, bottom R) and red; white disc; blue cock, red wattle, red flames, green 'bomb', gold details. **19:** *13e DBLE, 1946 to present.* Gold dragon, scroll, grenade; white ground, blue Cross of Lorraine; horizontal stripes green above red. Many variants. **20:** *1er REC, 1939 to present.* Silver wreath, green ties. Gold hilts. Shield green (top L), red (top R) and blue with silver and gold details. **21:** *2e Groupement Amphibie du 1er REC, 1952–56.* Silver, red carapace; variant has red cypher on all-silver crab. **22:** *1er Escadron du 1er REC, 1953–?63.* Second and fourth quarters blue with silver lilies; first and third quarters halved green (L) and red (R), with silver grenade and crab respectively. **23:** *1er Escadron du 1er REC, 1963 to present.* Silver. Identical badge used by 5e Escadron, 1954; and by 1er Esc, 2e REC shortly afterwards. **24:** *2e REC, 1939–62.* Silver; shield green (L), red (R) and blue. **25:** *1er BEP/REP, 1948–61.* The 'B' changed to 'R' in 1956. Silver. Wings of green above red, flanking '1'. **26:** *1e Cie Etrangère de Parachutistes Mortiers Lourds, 1953–54.* Silver; red flames, green rim to black 'bomb'. **27:** *2e BEP/REP, 1949 to present.* Silver; green (L) and red (R) plaque, gold grenade. **28:** *3e BEP/REP, 1950–55.* Green (L) and red (R) ground; silver wing and blade, gold hilt and grenade. **29:** *2e CSPL, 1957–63.* Gold Agadès cross, white star, red flames, green 'bomb'. **30:** *21e Cie Portée, GPLE d'Algérie, 1955–56.* Silver. **31:** *Batterie Saharienne Portée, 1939–40.* Silver star, crescent; gold cannons; black steering wheel; red flames, green 'bomb'. **32:** *2e Cie de Réparation, 1949–51; 2e Cie Moyenne de Réparation, 1951–54.* Gold; red outer, green inner circles inside cog; dark blue 'wings'. **33:** *Cie de Discipline de la Légion, Far East, 1948–54.* Gold, white sail, black incised 'CD'; motto 'DURA LEX, SED LEX'

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The French Foreign Legion has unique claims upon the interest of military historians and laymen alike. The only survival of the medieval tradition of permanently-raised mercenary forces, its men are renowned for their toughness and professionalism. Celebrating the 150th anniversary of its formation in March 1981, it has won an extraordinarily high reputation as a fighting force, paralleled only by an astonishing breadth of experience.

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Front cover
Left: Caporal, Grenadier Company, Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1863.
Centre: Sergent, 2^{e}RE, Figuig, North Africa, *circa* 1908.
Right: Légionnaire, 1erREP, Algiers, 1957.

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